

OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

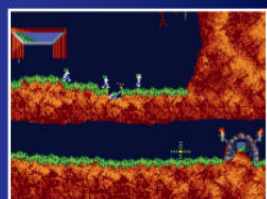
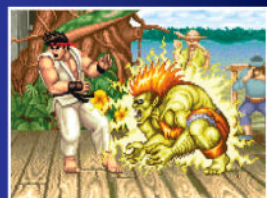
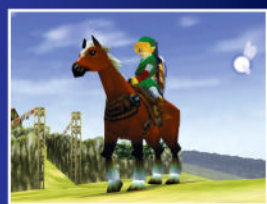
retro* GAMER™



**ULTIMATE GUIDE:
RICK DANGEROUS**
EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT CORE'S TOMB RAIDER

**THE MAKING OF
DIABLO II**
DISCOVER HOW BLIZZARD NORTH
CREATED ITS EPIC PC ACTION RPG

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THE 90's

A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

THE LANDMARK TITLES FROM A REVOLUTIONARY ERA



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UNIQUE ONE-ON-ONE FIGHTER

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ALL THE HITS, FROM
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THE RETROBATES

WHAT GAME DEFINED THE NINETIES FOR YOU?



DARRAN JONES

It's *The Legend Of Zelda: Ocarina Of Time* for me. I told my brother I'd disown him if he didn't buy it for me for Christmas. (He did.)
Expertise: Juggling a gorgeous wife, two beautiful girls and an award-winning magazine, all under one roof!
Currently playing: *Silent Hill 3*
Favourite game of all time: *OutRun 2006: Coast 2 Coast*



TIM EMPEY

From the moment I saw *Street Fighter II* in an arcade in Weston-Super-Mare, I knew I'd be spending a whole load of time on it.
Expertise: Finishing Game Pass games before they go
Currently playing: *Risk Of Rain 2*
Favourite game of all time: *God Hand*



NICK THORPE

It's a fairly obscure platform game called *Sonic The Hedgehog*. This is a deep cut, so I'm sure you'll all be very surprised to see it.
Expertise: Owning five Master Systems and a Mark III
Currently playing: *Gate Of Thunder*
Favourite game of all time: *Sonic The Hedgehog*



ANDY SALTER

Doom may not have been the first FPS but it is the most important. Turning the PC into a 'proper' games machine to rival the consoles. People are still asking "can it run *Doom*" 30 years later.
Expertise: Modding games, no 'vanilla' versions for me, thanks!
Currently modding: *Total War: Rome Remastered* - *RTR: Imperium Surrectum*
Favourite game of all time: *Rome: Total War* although I guess it's the *Remastered* edition now



RORY MILNE

It may not have been the first polygon-powered videogame, but in 1992 Sega's *Virtua Racing* seemed like a glimpse of what the future of gaming might hold.
Expertise: The game that I'm writing about at the time of writing
Currently playing: *TOCA Touring Car Championship*
Favourite game of all time: *Tempest*



PAUL ROSE

The Revenge Of Shinobi. Not the best, but the one I've got the most affection for. It blew my mind on first play.
Expertise: Winging it
Currently playing: *Sneaky Sasquatch*
Favourite game of all time: *Half-Life 2*



IAIN LEE

I'm going to choose Konami's superb *Metal Gear Solid*.
Expertise: Buying expensive stuff on eBay then never touching it.
Currently playing: *The Beatles: Rock Band*
Favourite game of all time: *Elite* (BBC Model B)



ANDREW FISHER

Tony Hawk's Pro Skater on PlayStation. It started an obsession with the series, so many great memories.
Expertise: Forty years of gaming, from Commodore 64 to Switch
Currently playing: *Strife Sisters*
Favourite game of all time: *Wizball*



MARTYN CARROLL

The original *Resident Evil* on PS1. Before zombies popped up in everything, it was so cool being locked in a mansion with those shamblin' dudes.
Expertise: Sinclair stuff
Currently playing: *Castlevania Legends*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*



If the Eighties was when our hobby was still fresh and exciting, the Nineties was when it came of age.

I was obsessed with consoles during this period, and would religiously import every big game I could afford from Japan or the US. Witnessing games like *Star Fox*, *Ridge Racer*, *Super Mario 64* and *GoldenEye 007* for the first time was truly staggering because they had all felt unachievable on consoles in the previous decade. Despite my console bias, I still enjoyed playing on home computers, as some of my friends continued to own Amigas. They eventually graduated to PC gaming which brought its own revelations, including *Doom*, *Tomb Raider* and *Baldur's Gate*. I purchased my own PC in the latter half of the decade and discovered even more amazing games.

This issue not only looks at this highly transformative era of gaming, but also celebrates 90 of the games that defined the decade (give yourself a pat on the back if you have played all 90 of them).

Other highlights include a look at the games of Brøderbund, the creation of *Budokan: The Martial Spirit*, *Vectorman 2* and *Diablo II*, an Ultimate Guide on *Rick Dangerous* and an in-depth interview with David Bishop. We also review the Analogue Duo, look at Numskull's incoming range of Quarter Arcade cabinets and much more.

Stay safe and enjoy the magazine.

LOADING

Handwritten signature



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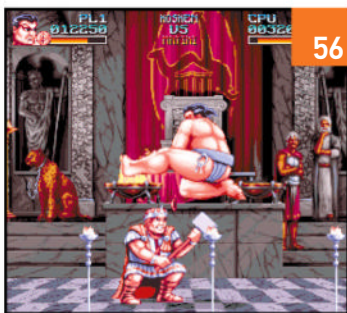
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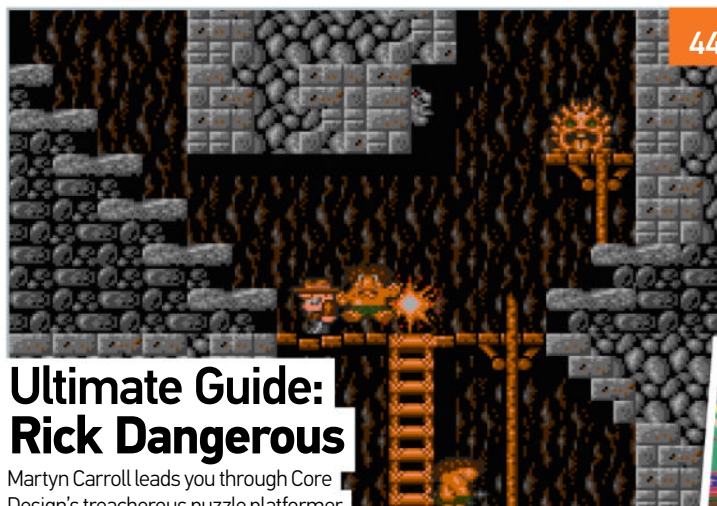
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Ultimate Guide: Rick Dangerous

Martyn Carroll leads you through Core Design's treacherous puzzle platformer





» Matt would like to do more four-player Konami games like *The Simpsons* in the future.

MARCH OF THE MINIS

What does the year ahead have in store for Quarter Arcades?

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You can't keep a good time traveller down. Nick reports on the games and systems of June 2007

Ever since it was introduced in 2018, the Quarter Arcades range of quarter-scale classic coin-op replicas has been a hit with collectors, thanks to a potent combination of great games and attention to detail.

To find out more about how the range has evolved and where it's going in 2024, we spoke to Matt Precious of Numskull, the company behind the range.

Releases planned for 2024 include the Taito trio of *Qix*, *Elevator Action* and *Zoo Keeper*, games that Matt says are quite far along. "We made the wooden samples, we put them on the Facebook group to show everyone, and someone said, 'It's brilliant, but obviously the instructions are

gonna light up, aren't they?'" The detail had been missed as the bulbs in the machines that Numskull used for reference had blown long ago, so the company had to retool the replicas to account for the lights. "As soon as we've got what we call a T1 sample we'll go through that, then go to a T2 sample and put it back on the group," says Matt. "As long as everyone's happy those three will probably be coming out at the same time, so they'll be a bit like London buses."

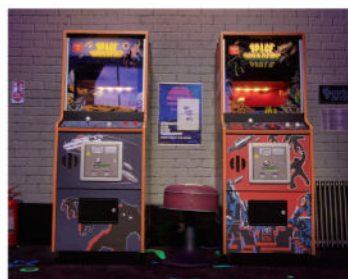
Pong and *Lunar Lander* are also both planned for the future, and will see the company tackling non-joystick controls for the first time. "We often make these decisions with our hearts, not our heads. I want to make *Lunar Lander* because it's one of my favourite games of all time, but *Lunar Lander*'s rubbish unless you've got the thruster," Matt tells us. "We're doing the thruster and it's gonna have the spring back and everything in there as well. Obviously we're going to



» Matt Precious is at Numskull, which produces Quarter Arcades and a variety of other gaming products.

have to tool these pieces especially by hand, but what we're trying to do now is to save costs. We're trying to use tooled internals for stuff like what holds the battery, what holds the screen. Then we can spend the money on the thruster, or the metal knobs on *Pong*. I'm hoping that these will be coming out cheaper than *Space Invaders* and *Turtles*."

Indeed, the prices of *Space Invaders* and the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* cabinets raised some eyebrows. Matt tells us that *Turtles* was a matter of being a larger machine with more parts, while *Space Invaders* was driven by its complexity. "Obviously nothing's off the shelf, it's not that we went, 'Let's get a quarter-sized moon that people have used before.' No one really has attempted to try and do the Pepper's Ghost effect since the original, and I understand why now, but that's what we wanted to create." However, some of it is simply inflation. "If you go back to when we first did *Pac-Man*, it came out at £149 – if we



» The complexity of recreating the *Space Invaders* machines explains the higher price point.



» The new *Space Invaders* cabinets, sitting alongside some older *Quarter Arcades* favourites.



» Here's a size comparison, showing the recent *Space Invaders* cabinet against the full-size machine.



» The vending machine USB hubs power up to five devices and are selling for £149.99.



» The vending machines were the result of the range outgrowing the previous *Polybius* USB hub.

made that today exactly the same, that would be £199," explains Matt. "That's us not making even as much profit, but that is just how much everything's gone up, mainly the parts – screens, electronics, plastic. It's just a crazy world that we live in."

But what of machines shown long ago, like *Track & Field*? "The deal was signed. Where *Chariots Of Fire* plays at the end, we actually got the deals signed separately with the music company to be able to play that. It was all ready to go," Matt explains. "Konami had to send it to Japan for sign off and they went, 'Not a problem, you can do it – oh, by the way you can't use the artwork.'" Konami doesn't actually own the artwork, so a deal also needs to be struck with the artist, but the Numskull team is committed to making it happen. "If you look at our machines, on the back they all have a plaque that's numbered.

“As long as everyone's happy those three will probably be coming out at the same time, so they'll be a bit like London buses”

MATT PRECIOUS

Number seven is missing, and the reason for that is I'm leaving number seven for *Track & Field*."

Data East games are also on the way, including *Bad Dudes Vs Dragon Ninja*. "If you had one game that encapsulated the late-Eighties, it's this – I mean just the name alone," says Matt. *RoboCop* and *The Real Ghostbusters* are also on the way, and the former is indicative of just how tricky the licensing situation can be. Since Orion Pictures, Data East and Ocean Software no longer exist, it was necessary to identify the current rights

holders – MGM, D4 Enterprise, and Atari – and negotiate with them. By comparison, the Pepsi and 7up vending machine USB hubs designed to power Quarter Arcades were much simpler to arrange, resulting from a prior deal to manufacture Pepsi Perfect bottles. These are due for release as a one-off run in February. "You put these tiny cans in the back and the button on the front dispenses them. They look fantastic because they all light up as well," says Matt.

As always, we'll keep you updated as the various Quarter Arcades projects progress. ✨

SEGA RETRO REVEALS

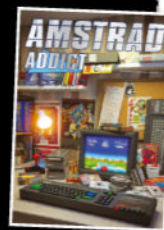
Sega has recently revealed a raft of new entries in classic series, showing brief snippets of new *Jet Set Radio*, *Crazy Taxi*, *Golden Axe*, *Shinobi* and *Streets Of Rage* games. None of these series has had a new console or PC game in the last decade, with the exception of *Streets Of Rage*. Details about all of the games are thin on the ground, but the original developers are involved with at least some of them.



» [PC] The new *Jet Set Radio* is looking faithful to the style of the Dreamcast game.

SUGARY SWEET

The special one-off print magazine *Amstrad Addict* is out now, celebrating the legacy of the CPC 8-bit computers. Editing duties were handled by regular **Retro Gamer** contributor David Crookes, with other articles contributed by the likes of Amstrad engineer Roland Perry and prominent fan Xyphoe. Across the mag's 60 pages, you can expect to find reviews of both old and new games, a type-in listing and interviews with developers and even Lord Sugar himself. *Amstrad Addict* is available at www.pixel.addict.media/shop for £8.00.



» Is that Batman Group's long-awaited *Vespertino* we spy on the monitor? Very nice.

Who is Iain Lee?

Iain Lee is a freelance counsellor who loves gaming, particularly retro gaming. You can get more information about Iain by visiting iainleecounselling.com or heading over to patreon.com/iainandKatherine



Love from Wii to U



popped up on the *This Week In Retro* podcast recently and got chatting about what retro is – when does it start or end.

I have a pretty firm line in my head – Wii U and PS3 are retro and anything that comes after that isn't. Now of course, that's just my humble opinion and I'm sure most of you will disagree. That's the beauty of this interest of ours, so many different ideas about what it even is we are celebrating.

The Wii U passed me by – never even touched one of those bad boys. I did have a Wii a lifetime ago but I honestly don't remember much about it. There was a samurai sword type of game that made me motion sick but beyond that, nothing. A small but significant hole in my gaming knowledge.

When I get bored, I like to pop on Facebook Marketplace and have a look at all the old tat that is for sale. Cassettes taped off the radio, glass bottle cutters and I even saw this week The Apparatus that would have been screwed to school hall walls and occasionally brought out for PE.

Quick interjection – the people who list things on Facebook Marketplace as FREE and then when you scroll down it says something like 'open to sensible offers'. No. Do not do that. You people are the worst, and you deserve the trolling you get from me if I am super bored about how the kids at the orphanage I volunteer at

would love this item that is FREE and when can I collect it? I inevitably get blocked fairly quickly.

I was pottering about on there and I saw a Wii listed with *The Beatles: Rock Band* and a guitar for a tenner. Because of the aforementioned podcast appearance, I'd been thinking about the Wii and this just seemed like too good an opportunity to pass up. The vendor was ten minutes away. It's one of those situations where it would have been rude not to have bought it.

Thirty minutes later I'm at home getting it all going. Straight away I was back in time to 2009 – marvelling at the slightly blurry graphics and cursing because I couldn't quite get my head around moving the on-screen cursor. Once it was set up though, I was ready to rock. I stood there triumphant with my guitar slung over my shoulder, nervously approaching the entrance of the Cavern Club.

My word. *The Beatles: Rock Band*, what a magnificent game. Yes, I will grant you that I couldn't get past the first song for quite a while until I remembered you have to strum as well as pushing the brightly coloured buttons. But once I did and I cranked it all the way up to Easy I was having

a blast. How did we ever as a nation get tired of these things? And what do we need to do to convince games companies to MAKE MORE OF THEM PLEASE THANK YOU?

Right, enough of this. Time to jump back on Marketplace and see if I can find a drum kit to go with this. ✨

“How did we ever as a nation get tired of these things?”

Do you agree with Iain's thoughts? Contact us at:

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JOIN CAPTAIN FRANKIE LEE ENGLISH AND HIS TRUSTED COLLEAGUE ALER AS THEY TRAVEL THROUGH THE COSMOS IN SEARCH OF PLANETS TO CLAM FOR A NEW GALACTIC BRITISH EMPIRE.



OUT NOW

SECRETMODE MARS HORIZON 2 THE SEARCH FOR LIFE

LEAD YOUR SPACE AGENCY IN THE SEARCH FOR LIFE IN THIS AUTHENTIC STRATEGY SIMULATION GAME. INVESTIGATE THE SOLAR SYSTEM AND COLLECT EVIDENCE OF LIFE.



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A 3D PET SIMULATION WHERE YOU RAISE YOUR OWN PERSONAL HIVE OF MUTATING DOGS, PHYSICALLY SIMULATE ALL THE WAY DOWN TO THEIR GUTS.



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SLITHER, COIL AND CLIMB YOUR WAY TO THE TOP OF HAVEN TON IN THIS ONE OF A KIND PHYSICS BASED MIDDLE PLATFORM ADVENTURE.



OUT NOW

SECRETMODE A LITTLE TO THE LEFT

A COZY PUZZLE GAME THAT HAS YOU SORT, STACK, AND ORGANIZE HOUSEHOLD ITEMS.



OUT NOW

SECRETMODE STAMPEDE: RACING ROYALE

AVOID ELIMINATION AND FIGHT YOUR WAY TO THE FRONT OF THE HERD IN THE SCRAMBLE TO BE CROWNED CHAMPION!



COMING SOON

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PICK UP TRASH, EXPLORE THE VIBRANT WATERS, AND TAKE CARE OF AXOLOTL-LIKE ALIEN CREATURES!



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SECRETMODE STILL WAKES THE DEEP

NAVIGATE A COLLAPSING OIL RIG TO SAVE YOUR CREW FROM AN OTHERWORLDLY HORROR ON THE EDGE OF ALL LOGIC AND REALITY.



COMING SOON

SECRETMODE PARCEL CORPS

RIDE ALONG WALLS, GRIND RAILS, AND STARTLE PIGEONS ON YOUR WAY TO CORPORATION-TOPPLING DOMINATION.



COMING SOON

SECRETMODE MAKE WAY

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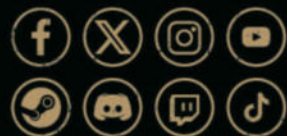


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Developers: The Chinese Room (Little Orpheus, Dear Esther, Still Wakes The Deep), Cosmonaut (Eternal Threads), Sumo Digital Academy (Zoo Redimensioned), Sumo Digital (Snake Pass), Billy Goat Entertainment (Her Majesty's Spiffing, Parcel Corps), Auroch Digital (Mars Horizon 2), Animal Uprising (Wobbledogs), Hugocalf (Turbo Golf Racing), Max Inferno (A Little To The Left), Sumo Learnington (Stampede: Racing Royale), Moon Lagoon (Loddlenaut), Ice Beam (Make Way)

Who is Paul Rose?

Paul is probably better known as Mr Biffo – the creator of legendary teletext games magazine *Digitiser*. These days, he mostly writes his videogame ramblings over at Digitiser2000.com. If you want more Biffo in your eyes, you can catch him as the host of *Digitizer The Show* at www.bit.ly/biffo2000.

Seismic shifts



The current generation of games consoles is the first time I've held back from upgrading. As I write this, I don't own a PS5 or an Xbox Series X as – from all I've seen – it's the most incremental generational shift in games industry history. It has been heading this way for a while, each new generation becoming less essential than the last.

From the Atari I got a ZX Spectrum, and that again was a massive, profound, change. That's when games, for me, fulfilled their potential. The higher resolution allowed the likes of *Atic Atac* and *Ant Attack* to have real character for the first time. The addition of a keyboard opened up all manner of possibilities, and games developed a depth that was previously inconceivable. Could you imagine playing *Elite* with an Atari joystick or paddle?

When I went from the Spectrum to the Atari ST, the shift was similarly staggering. Not only were the graphics better – no more colour clash – but the addition of a mouse allowed for yet more new styles of game. Plus, we got games in proper 3D. *Powerdrome* and *Castle Master* were difficult to the point of being unplayable, but ohhhh... they looked amazing.

Admittedly, I went a bit sideways with my next games machine; the Master System. While in many respects it wasn't as powerful as the ST, it was a dedicated console, and that was noticeable. As was the upgrade from the MS to the Mega Drive; finally, arcade games in my bedroom! Look at all that

parallax scrolling! Or, as we knew it back then, 'that thing where the background looks sort of like it has depth to it'.

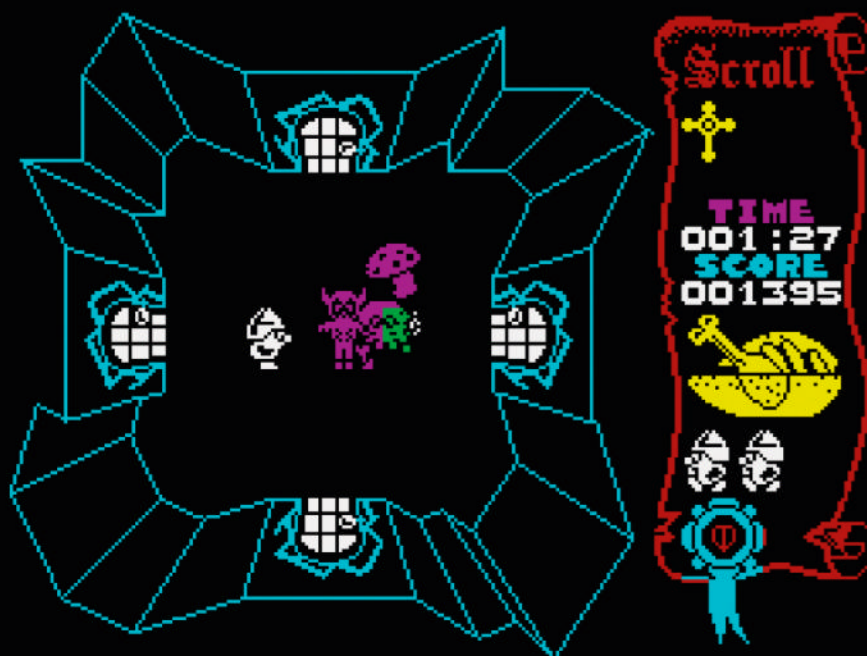
From there, things really moved into a new era, and kept moving. CD-ROM. Full-motion video. All those polygons! Texture-mapping! Online gameplay! The pace of the progress was breath-taking. With each new iteration of gaming technology we were given new ways to play games.

Heck, you even had Nintendo running alongside all this, just sort of doing its own thing – a closed evolutionary chain, like a sort of gaming Madagascar; instead of lemurs and baobab trees we got touch screens and motion controls. And evolutionary dead-ends like the Virtual Boy; Nintendogascar's equivalent of a duck born with a nozzle instead of a beak.

My point is, every generation of gaming hardware not only moved the technology forwards, but the games as well. You couldn't have played *Super Mario 64* on the Super NES any more than you could've played, say, *Ridge Racer* on the 32X. Well, maybe you could've, but it would've probably given both you and the hardware a seizure.

And then we get to today; the move from Xbox 360/PlayStation 3 to Xbox One/PS4 to Xbox Series S/X and PS5 is more pigeon-step than quantum leap. Slightly better graphics. Shorter loading times. Yet more haptic feedback. I dunno. I miss the excitement of discovering what that next generation would reveal. So no, I'm in no hurry to move up a generation.

Well, I wasn't, but then they announced *Grand Theft Auto VI*, so... y'know. ★



“When I went from the Spectrum to the Atari ST, the shift was similarly staggering”

Do you agree with Paul's thoughts? Contact us at:

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SECRET
MODE



» One of our favourite videos is where Robert makes an excellent little portable gaming system on wheels.

RetroRGB

Robert Neal on the origins of his essential hardware website

If you're a fan of using old systems, you'll be well aware of RetroRGB. It's not only a fantastic website filled with fascinating guides about getting the best out of your classic hardware, but is also supplemented by an excellent YouTube channel (youtube.com/@RetroRGB) and Podcast. We spoke to founder Robert Neal to find out more about this brilliant community hub.

Why did you create RetroRGB?



» Robert's non-weekly videos "average a full week's worth of work, with some easier and some MUCH harder".

RetroRGB was originally a Google doc I was compiling, so my cousin Scott and a few of our friends could reference it to improve their setups. Scott suggested I make it into a website, since that's what I'd done in the Nineties for an emulation website I had. I basically made it for myself and my friends and never considered it would take off.

What makes RGB such a good signal for classic games?



» Robert says, "We're VERY lucky that these days there's a ton of 'right' ways to play and very few 'wrong' ones, but that's tricky to navigate."

It's the purest signal most pre-1999-era consoles outputted. While there are a few exceptions, most consoles generated their video signals as RGBs, then used chips on the motherboards to convert that down to Y/C (S-Video), CVBS (Composite) and RF. Pulling RGB means you're not seeing any of the interference composite video added... although sometimes developers used that 'blur' to create pretty amazing effects. That's why I always say ANY CRT is amazing for retro.

There's a lot of great glossaries and tutorials on your site. Did you write them all yourself?

Thank you. Yup, 99% of the content on the site was made by me. Although, in the past few years, we've had some amazing contributors share their knowledge in the news section. I'm so thankful for this, as we've now covered so many topics that I just

» Robert Neal's RetroRGB website started life as a simple Google document. It has since become much bigger.

don't have the expertise to handle.

Where does your technical knowledge come from?

Well, my retro-gaming knowledge comes from the fact that I was around when it was the newest and best. I've also been closely following software emulation since the mid-Nineties. But in my professional career, I was a project manager at a company that designed and manufactured medical-grade computers. I'm lucky that I got to bring all the knowledge I gained there with me to RetroRGB, as I rely on that quite a bit when I help small companies launch new products in the scene.

You do a lot of technical deep dives on your YouTube channel. How long do they take to create?

That's a tough one to answer. Once I have the data I need to start making a video, it can be

between 10-40 hours of work. Getting that data is tricky though. Sometimes testing (like lag testing) is pretty straightforward and I can only spend a few days researching and testing. But I'm often working on things not many people work on and am coming up with some of these procedures as I research. Things like my video capture tutorials are hundreds of hours of testing, filled with mostly mistakes. I'm working on a VHS capture video now that essentially compiles info I've been learning for over 20 years... and I'm still learning new things every time I dig into it!

What hardware items have impressed you the most in recent years?

The MiSTer FPGA project and the RetroTink 4K. The MiSTer is just insane – developers from all over the world, reverse-engineering classic gaming hardware and recreating them in 'hardware emulation' form. They can be equal to, or better than originals

and people can get started for under \$300. On the high-end of things, the RetroTink 4K is the most amazing scaler ever made. It can significantly improve everything from game consoles up to the very latest models, as well as all classic TV shows and movies from all mediums. The much cheaper RetroTink-5X is great too and probably a better choice for most people... but if you're the type of person who enjoys high-end audio and video, there's no better option than the RetroTink 4K. And there simply won't be for years to come.

Your weekly roundups videos are really useful. Why did they come about?

I wanted to do a better job highlighting all the amazing new products being released, as well as the developers behind them. Also, the news posts on the website came from the podcast! You'd think it would have naturally happened the opposite way: start a blog, then do a podcast on the



» Robert has interviewed a large number of community members, from journalists to developers.

blog... but nope! The news posts on the website were a way to much more easily archive the info discussed in the weekly podcast. And I'm so happy I did both, as they've really helped me connect with more people in the retro gaming scene, as well as help smaller dev's promote AWESOME stuff that more mainstream tech channels wouldn't be interested in. Each week is really just a love letter to all the cool stuff I

talk about... with the occasional warning about something crappy.

What can readers do to support your website and videos?

I appreciate you asking. Monthly support services like Patreon are really what keep this all going, but clicking on affiliate links helps so much as well. I have more info on the support page, if anyone's interested bit.ly/SupportRetroRGB ✨



» Robert's videos can be extremely in-depth. In this one he covers everything about getting into Sega's popular Dreamcast.



» Robert's weekly roundups cover everything from new games to incoming hardware.

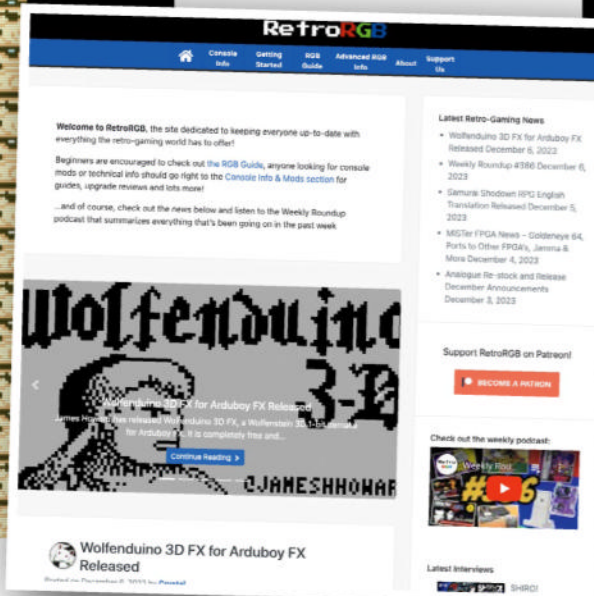
"I wanted to do a better job highlighting all the amazing new products being released"

ROBERT NEAL

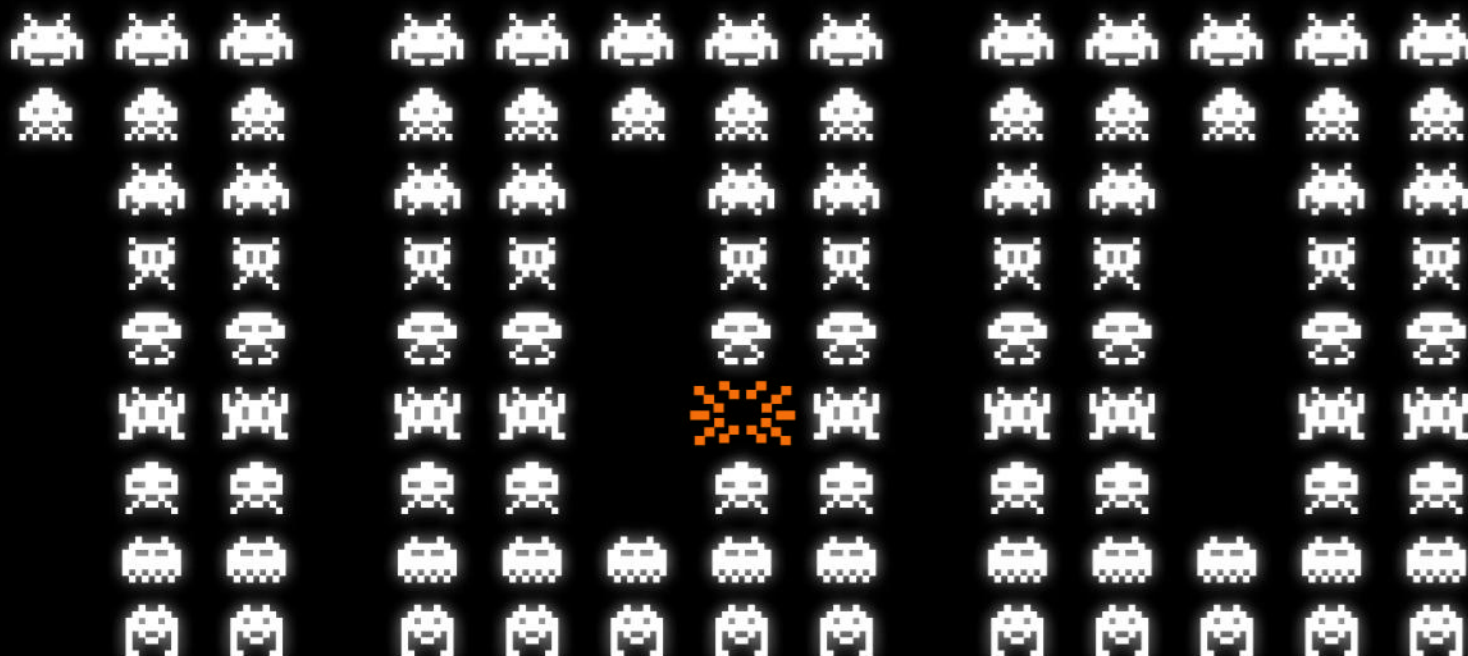
» Although Robert has written many of the website's guide, he now receives a lot of additional help.



» Robert's respect within the community means RetroRGB often has great early videos on new devices like the RetroTink 4K.



RETRO GAMER'S



GREATEST GAMES

WE'RE CELEBRATING HISTORY'S MOST IMPORTANT GAMES – AND WE NEED YOUR HELP

To mark our 20th anniversary, we're putting together the definitive list of **Retro Gamer's 100 greatest games**. In addition to contributions from the **Retro Gamer** team, we'll also be including votes from **Retro Gamer** readers, and that's where you come in.

What do we mean by 'greatest'? We mean the titles that have defined gaming – not just for you personally, but for videogames as a whole. Which games have been the most influential, leaving the most indelible marks on the industry? We're not simply looking for games that are as great to play today as they were upon release, but also the ones that have made the most significant impacts. For example, you might not return to the original 1978 *Space Invaders* today over a more contemporary version of Taito's mega hit, but it could deserve your vote

here because of its influence and legacy. Similarly, *Super Mario 64* may not be quite as sprightly in 2024 as it was 28 years ago, but that doesn't mean the game wasn't revolutionary in its day, and therefore appropriate for our countdown. The list goes on.

We want to create a landmark guide to gaming's golden eras, curating a collection of titles that represent the best of the form since its beginning. To do it, we need your contributions. In terms of eligibility, you can vote for games released for any system prior to **Retro Gamer's** launch. This makes PS2, Xbox, GameCube and GBA the cut-off point – any votes for games released on later systems are ineligible and will be discarded (PC games are eligible until 2007).

Send your votes to retrogamer@futurenet.com, using the subject line '100'.

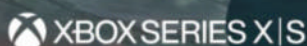
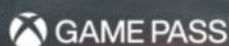
“We want to create a landmark guide to gaming's golden eras”

Please list your top 20 games, putting them in order of greatness from 1 to 20. If you want to include justification for some of your favourite examples, include up to 50 words on each game and we'll publish a selection in the magazine.

The deadline for voting is 8 February but don't wait until then as Nick is itching to start crunching your votes (he loves juggling stats almost as much as *Sonic The Hedgehog*). We look forward to your nominations. ★

STILLWAKES THE DEEP

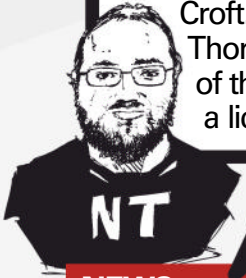
COMING 2024
WISHLIST NOW



BACK TO THE NOUGHTIES



JUNE 2007 – We're having something of a summer blockbuster season, with the first preview of next year's guaranteed hit and the return of megastars Mario and Lara Croft. Buckle up, Nick Thorpe is at the wheel of the DeLorean without a licence



**NEWS
JUNE 2007**

The first episode of *Britain's Got Talent* aired on ITV1 on 9 June.

Devised by music producer and *The X Factor* judge Simon Cowell, the show adopted a similar format to Cowell's previous show but without the musical focus, allowing a broader range of acts to compete for the £100,000 prize. The first series was won by Paul Potts, and the show is still running today.

WWE announced the deaths of wrestler Chris Benoit, his wife Nancy Benoit and their son David Benoit on 25 June. Later that night, during the airing of a Chris Benoit tribute edition of *WWE Raw*, reports emerged that he had murdered his family before committing suicide. Subsequent examinations revealed that repeated concussions had left Chris Benoit with chronic traumatic encephalopathy, which may have contributed to the tragedy.

On 27 June, Tony Blair resigned as UK prime minister after a little over ten years in the job. Though he had delivered unprecedented electoral victories for Labour, his popularity had declined due to his handling of the war in Iraq and his reliance on controversial spin doctors such as Peter Mandelson. Gordon Brown was unopposed in Labour's leadership election, and succeeded Blair as prime minister.



» [PlayStation 2] Hey, Lara never had that rope back in 1996 – nor a character model that good.

THE LATEST NEWS FROM JUNE 2007

Grand Theft Auto IV was unveiled this month, for Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and PC.

The first HD entry in the series was to be a return to Liberty City, starring Niko Bellic – “an Eastern European immigrant, whose shady dealings back home have landed him in hot water with local gangs”, according to *Official Xbox 360 Magazine*. In *Official PlayStation Magazine*, Rockstar's Dan Houser

explained that the team's goal was to make the game feel “more organic, fluid and precise” than past *GTA* games, and that he felt “the artificial intelligence needs to have a similar quality to the visuals or it's not going to hold together”. Regarding political satire, he noted that the team was “confident about satirising certain people's responses to [the war on terror], and using it as a catch-all excuse for any kind of limitation on your freedom”.

Top critical honours this month went to the Wii-exclusive *Super Paper Mario*, an action RPG in which Mario flipped between 2D and 3D views of his worlds. The game scored 8.7/10 in *nRevolution* and 9/10 in *games™* which felt that it was “relatively shallow but contains enjoyable combat, and is packed full of secrets and wonderfully realised worlds”. *Edge* was a little less impressed, describing it as “a little rough around the edges” but “genuinely, wonderfully unique” and giving it 7/10. Also on the Wii this month, *Mario Strikers: Charged Football* impressed *Official Nintendo Magazine*, which gave it 91% in large part due to online play that “works a treat”. *Edge* and *nRevolution* were unconvinced, scoring the game 6/10 and 6.9/10 respectively, with the latter saying that it was “far too similar to the Cube version”. A belated port of *Mortal Kombat: Armageddon* also earned 85% in *ONM* and 7.9/10 in *nRevolution*.



» [Xbox 360] *Grand Theft Auto IV* was supposed to be ready before Christmas 2007, but got delayed to 2008.



Lara Croft returned to her roots in *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*, a remake of the original game for PS2 and PC. The PS2 version received scores of 9/10 in *OPM* and 85% in *Play*, with the latter claiming that "this franchise has never been in better shape". The game also scored 7/10 in *Edge* and *games™* gave it 6/10, which commended Crystal Dynamics for creating a "competent modern adventure" but opined that "when judged at face value and on a shelf next to Kratos and company, it just doesn't stand up". Japanese RPG *Shadow Hearts: From The New World* earned 8/10 in *Official PlayStation 2 Magazine*, which said that, "The combat and sidequests will keep you entertained for ages." *Play* gave it 65%, while *Edge* said it felt "like the videogame equivalent of a direct to DVD effort" in its 6/10 review.

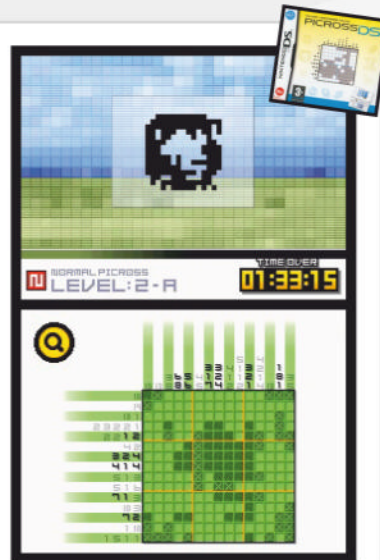
Players of the shiny HD consoles didn't have much to cheer about this month – PS3 players faced a barren release schedule. Xbox 360 owners at least got some nice ports, with *Command & Conquer 3: Tiberium Wars* scoring 8/10 in *Official 360*, 8/10 in *X-360* and 3/5 in *360*. *Castlevania: Symphony Of The*

» [Wii] We always knew Nintendo was hiding things behind the scenery in 2D Mario games.



Night also arrived as a high-profile Xbox Live Arcade release, and scored 9/10 in *Official 360*. *PC Gamer's* highest rated game of the month was *Peggle*, a "cross between pool and pinball" that scored 80% for being, "Chaotic but magnificent bouncy fun." The rather belated port of Bungie's hit Xbox first-person shooter *Halo 2* notably earned just 66%, for being "achingly, repulsively mediocre, with a galumphing, clumsy story, poorly orchestrated action and bad music".

Handheld players had things rather better. *Picross DS* brought the puzzle favourite to a new format and earned 9.0/10 from *nRevolution*, 87% in *ONM* and 8/10 in *games™* which called it "the most complete version yet". Importers could also get *Konami Classics Series: Arcade Hits*, a strong effort from M2 that earned 8.7/10 from *nRevolution*. PSP owners got PS1 RPG remake *Valkyrie Profile: Lenneth*, which scored 78% in *Play* and 8/10 in *Official PS2*, which praised its "varied, innovative, engaging gameplay". Also on Sony's machine, *Ratchet & Clank: Size Matters* scored 9/10 in *OPM*, which felt



» [DS] *Picross DS* might not be much to look at, but we could spend weeks playing it.

that the portable platformer was "brilliantly put together". Although *games™* felt that it was "one of the premier adventures on the system", it bemoaned a revised control scheme that "falls short of the simplicity two sticks affords" and gave it 7/10.

Could we be in for more spectacular summer games in July? Join us again next month to find out. *



» [PSP] Get over the compromised controls, and *Ratchet & Clank* is fun on the go.

CHARTS

JUNE 2007

XBOX 360

- 1 – **Crackdown** (Microsoft)
- 2 – **Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter 2** (Ubisoft)
- 3 – **Gears Of War** (Microsoft)
- 4 – **Guitar Hero II** (RedOctane)
- 5 – **Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six: Vegas** (Ubisoft)



PLAYSTATION 3

- 1 – **MotorStorm** (Sony)
- 2 – **Resistance: Fall Of Man** (Sony)
- 3 – **Formula One Championship Edition** (Sony)
- 4 – **Call Of Duty 3** (Activision)
- 5 – **Virtua Tennis 3** (Sega)



WII

- 1 – **Wii Play** (Nintendo)
- 2 – **The Legend Of Zelda: Twilight Princess** (Nintendo)
- 3 – **Sonic And The Secret Rings** (Sega)
- 4 – **Tiger Woods PGA Tour 07** (EA)
- 5 – **WarioWare: Smooth Moves** (Nintendo)



MUSIC

- 1 – **Umbrella** (Rihanna feat Jay-Z)
- 2 – **Icky Thump** (White Stripes)
- 3 – **Do You Know** (Enrique Iglesias)
- 4 – **Like This** (Kelly Rowland feat Eve)
- 5 – **Real Girl** (Mutya Buena)



THIS MONTH IN...



Play

"Zombies are so passé. Seriously, why are they in everything? From films, comics, TV programmes all the way back to games and perhaps pornography, we find ourselves in a quagmire of the semi-dead." Agreed, Tim Empey.



Edge

A new study by the BBFC has found the ratings board may be rating games too harshly. "We're not in the business of saying 'no', we're in the business of setting the appropriate rating," says the BBFC's spokesperson Sue Clark.



X360

"Sony has historically come up with new formats time and time again and they seldom work out," says David Crookes of *Blu-Ray*. "HD-DVD has a huge range of blockbusters, crisp images, superb sound and this drive is a bargain."

2020

Asteroids

IT ROCKS

» RETROREVIVAL



» ATARI 7800 » 1984 » ATARI INC

With the benefit of hindsight, it's easy to see why the Atari 7800 wasn't the success that Atari had hoped it might be, and a

big part of the problem is that it had all of yesterday's greatest hits. *Asteroids* is a great example of that. Though the arcade original is a classic that remains beloved to this day, it was already five years old by the intended launch date of the 7800 in 1984. It was even more dated by the time the console actually reached retail, and that was a pattern – games like *Donkey Kong*, *Galaga* and *Joust* all appeared on the console years past their prime.

The thing is, *Asteroids* may not have been the freshest arcade hit when the 7800 conversion was made, but the arcade original is closer to being 50 years old than five years old now and we still find ourselves playing it. So I decided to revisit this release, and wouldn't you know it, it's a great conversion. It controls very well, the art style makes a lot of sense given that there's no good way of replicating the vector graphics of the arcade game, and there's even a simultaneous two-player mode.

Perhaps the best role for *Asteroids* back in the Eighties was the one it served in Europe, where it was built into the system as something to get you started before moving on to other things. But now that we're beyond worrying about the relative age of the games we enjoy, maybe it's time to re-evaluate the Atari 7800? *Asteroids* is just the tip of the iceberg, after all – it has great conversions of plenty of early Eighties hits like *Centipede*, *Dig Dug* and those mentioned above. Even though we have access to the arcade originals, these versions have their own features and a charm of their own, so they're worth exploring if you get the chance. ✨





THE 90s A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

THE NINETIES SAW GAMING GO THROUGH A HUGE TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE THAT MAY NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN. IT LED TO INNOVATION, EXCITING NEW IDEAS AND THE GENERAL EXPANSION OF THE VIDEOGAME INDUSTRY. JOIN US AS WE REVISIT THIS INCREDIBLE DECADE AND THE MANY HIT GAMES IT SPAWNED

WORDS BY NICK THORPE AND DARRAN JONES

INTERVIEWS

It's quite possible we'll never have a decade like the Nineties in gaming again. Think about it. When was the last time you can recall a span of ten years that saw not only spectacular growth within the industry itself, but an incredible variety of consoles, systems and games to enjoy?

In the early Nineties you had the rise of 16-bit systems and handhelds, which quickly gave way to 32-bit machines like the PlayStation, then powerful systems like the Dreamcast in the decade's twilight years. That's an exponentially huge leap in technology in a short space of time and that technology unlocked all manner of interesting games as the decade progressed.

Humble 8-bit computers were still offering gaming experiences like *Lemmings*, *Turrican* and *Mayhem In Monsterland* in the early Nineties, while even the ancient Atari 2600 managed to last until 1992. Nintendo's Game Boy, which had debuted overseas in the summer of 1989, became ubiquitous with handheld gaming during the Nineties, effortlessly seeing off powerful competitors like the Atari Lynx and Game Gear, while home computers like the Atari ST and Amiga proved they still had plenty to offer over their expensive PC counterparts (at least for a short time).

Technology marches ever onwards though and polygons (which were admittedly around in the previous decade) began to dominate, with arcade developers like Namco and Sega using them to power their gaming experiences to make them feel even more realistic. In a way this aggressive development helped accelerate the demise of the traditional arcade. After all, one of the main reasons gamers visited arcades was to receive an experience they couldn't emulate in the home – that became less of an issue as 3D-capable systems like the PlayStation were able to replicate arcade games with a previously unmatched level of authenticity.

This strive for realism also brought controversy with the mainstream media commenting on the violence in games like *Night Trap*, *Mortal Kombat* and *Grand Theft Auto* far more than it had in previous decades. Digitised graphics and the enhanced power of consoles and 3D-accelerated PCs offered an unrivalled sense of 'realism' that may look laughable today, but had plenty of critics twitching about how much games were changing.

It wasn't just games that became unrecognisable. There was huge growth within the industry itself. More complicated visuals in the mid-Nineties and onwards saw teams expand in size to accommodate, while many classic developers of the Eighties struggled to adapt to the demands of 3D gaming and closed or were swallowed up by their rivals.

The following pages will not only examine each individual year of the Nineties, but will also celebrate 90 of the games that arguably defined the decade for so many of us. How many did you get to experience? ▶



JAZ RIGNALL

Editor,
Mean Machines



ANDY PALMER

Founder,
Arcade Club



TOM ZITO

President and CEO,
Digital Pictures



TOM HALL

Cofounder,
id Software



KEITH HAMILTON

Lead programmer,
Grand Theft Auto



MARTIN EDMONDSON

Cofounder, Reflections



GAVIN RUMMERY

Lead programmer,
Tomb Raider II



CHRIS SCHILLING

Deputy editor,
Edge



PAUL DAVIES

Editor, *Computer & Video Games*



MINH LE

Co-designer,
Counter-Strike

DEFINING GAMES!

SUPER MARIO WORLD

NINTENDO EAD

■ With its meticulous level design and tight controls, Mario's SNES debut became the poster child for 2D platforming. Three decades on, it's still unbeatable.



KLAX

ATARI GAMES

■ Atari wasn't wrong when it said, "It is the Nineties and there is time for *Klax*." Its frantic, tile-stacking hit was converted to a huge number of home systems.



TURRICAN

RAINBOW ARTS

■ Manfred Trenz's beautifully polished shooter proved there was still plenty of life in the C64 and that it could easily compete with its console contemporaries.



JOHN MADDEN FOOTBALL

PARK PLACE PRODUCTIONS

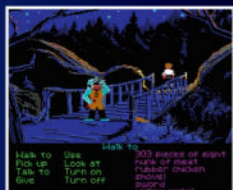
■ An easy-to-use interface, accessible controls and challenging AI transformed EA's 1988 release into a global console mega hit, which is still going strong today.



THE SECRET OF MONKEY ISLAND

LUCASFILM GAMES

■ *Monkey Island's* delightfully quippy script and lovable characters cemented LucasFilm's reputation for cleverly written adventures and shaped the very genre itself.



WING COMMANDER

ORIGIN SYSTEMS

■ Chris Roberts' *Star Wars*-inspired epic ushered in a bold new era of space combat games that put as much effort into their frantic dogfights as they did storytelling.



F-ZERO

NINTENDO EAD

■ It might have lacked polygons, but *F-Zero's* blistering speed and Mode 7 trickery proved that home systems could deliver exciting, arcade-like experiences.



PGA TOUR GOLF

STERLING SILVER SOFTWARE

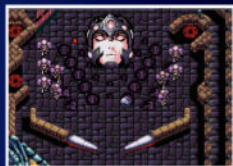
■ Clever mechanics, excellent physics and slick TV-like presentation helped revolutionise digital golf in a way that just hadn't been possible on earlier systems.



DEVIL CRASH

COMPILE

■ With a compelling graphical theme and features a real table could never provide, *Devil Crash* was a great pinball game that the PC Engine import crowd loved.



» [Amiga] *Speedball 2's* futuristic sports action mixed brutality and style to hook players.

1990

As the new decade dawned, most players here

in the UK were playing games on home computers. The 16-bit Amiga and Atari ST were tempting more players to upgrade their hardware, with releases like *Kick Off 2*, *Speedball 2*, *Star Control*, *Super Cars* and *Wings* all impressing players. Those still playing the venerable 8-bit machines still had plenty to enjoy though, thanks to games like *Flimbo's Quest*, *Creatures*, *Lords Of Chaos* and *Dizzy's* continuing adventures, as well as great arcade conversions like *Midnight Resistance* and *Rainbow Islands*.

Player preferences were changing, however. The launch of *Mean Machines* magazine reflected increased interest in the console market and it wasn't hard to see why players were hooked. Highlights of the year included *Dr Mario* and *Mega Man 3* on the NES and *Alex Kidd In Shinobi World* on the Master System, while import devotees swore by games like *Bomberman* on the PC Engine. The Game Boy made its European debut, while Japanese players gained the Game Gear and Lynx owners enjoyed conversions of *RoadBlasters*, *Rampage* and *Klax*.

Computer manufacturers could see the way the tide was turning, but the Commodore 64 Games System and Amstrad GX4000 were limp efforts based on outdated hardware, palling in comparison to the 16-bit machines – the Mega Drive finally launching in Europe and the Super Famicom in Japan. Sega's machine gained games like *Castle Of Illusion*, *Thunder Force III* and *Strider*, while Nintendo's new system roared out of the gate with offerings like *Pilotwings* and *Actraiser*.

In the arcades, SNK's new Neo Geo MVS hardware attracted operators with its affordable cartridge-based games, such as *NAM-1975* and *Magician Lord*. Players who fancied an extended spell with the games could rent the home-console equivalent, the Neo Geo AES. Atari Games also had some success with *Pit Fighter* and *STUN Runner*, with their still-novel digitised sprites and polygonal graphics doing plenty to impress arcade regulars – though the latter is a far stronger game.

JAZ RIGNALL ON THE CONSOLE WARS



"Sega vs Nintendo wasn't a 'trend'. It was simply another chapter in the ongoing tradition of kids' tribalism around specific brands. This kind of tribalism also applies to car brands, graphic cards, camera brands and almost anything else you can think of where people can spend money on an item that has a competitor and they want to feel like they've made the best choice. It was kind of fun winding people up about it back in the day, but honestly? As someone who enjoyed games on all systems, it was always really annoying. Sure, everyone should have their favourite systems, but if you've reached adulthood and have yet to figure out all systems have great games and can deliver huge amounts of fun, you really are a sad sack."



» [Arcade] Co-op beat-'em-ups were big business in the arcades of the early Nineties.

1991

If you stepped into an arcade in 1991, you couldn't help but notice that beat-'em-ups were in vogue, particularly licensed ones like *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Turtles In Time* and *The Simpsons* by Konami, as well as Sega's *Spider-Man: The Video Game*. However, it was the monster success of *Street Fighter II*'s one-on-one fisticuffs that helped to reverse a trend of arcade decline. *Street Fighter* director Takashi Nishiyama's own spiritual successor, SNK's *Fatal Fury*, helped to drive the nascent fighting game boom.

In tech terms, the console manufacturers were each touting their ambitious CD-ROM plans. Nintendo worked with Sony to develop a SNES-compatible system, only to announce a deal that it had secretly signed with Philips in the summer. NEC bolstered its existing PC Engine CD-ROM drive with the Super System Card, with *Dragon Slayer: The Legend Of Heroes* serving as an early highlight for the new format. Sega launched its Mega-CD in Japan at the end of the year, with *Sol-Feace* being its most exciting game.

Cartridges may not have held the same futuristic appeal, but they hosted extremely fine games. The SNES arrived in North America and quickly captivated players with games like *SimCity*, *Super Castlevania IV*, *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, *Super R-Type* and *Super Tennis*, as well as *Final Fantasy IV* and *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* in Japan. The Mega Drive became a phenomenon thanks to a certain speedy hedgehog, but also gained strong games like *EA Hockey*, *Shining In The Darkness*, *Streets Of Rage* and *ToeJam & Earl*.

On the home computers, sequels like *Super Cars II* and *Turrican II: The Final Fight* delivered reliable fun, while *Hunter* was an early demonstration of how much fun sandbox game design could be. Geoff Crammond released the first game in his *Formula 1 Grand Prix* series, and Team17 announced its arrival on the Amiga with *Full Contact* and *Alien Breed*. Duke Nukem made his platform game debut on the PC, and *The Shadow Of Yserbius* became one of the first graphical online RPGs.

ANDY PALMER ON CAPCOM'S ARCADE HIT



"*Street Fighter II* occupies rarefied air in the realms of arcade titles. It quite literally reinvented the arcade landscape whilst giving birth to the modern esports scene with its onus on competitive play. Not many games can say that. Unfortunately, its success led to the death of many classic machines. As operators scrambled to take advantage of the game's popularity, they destroyed a lot of dedicated machines by converting them into *Street Fighter II* cabinets. The worst I've personally seen is a hideous conversion of *Space Invaders*. How? Don't ask!"

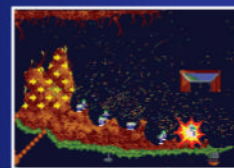
THE 90S: A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

DEFINING GAMES!

LEMMINGS

DMA DESIGN

■ As deviously difficult as its protagonists were cute, *Lemmings*' blend of useful character skills and freeform puzzle design saw it swarming to multiple systems.



STREET FIGHTER II: THE WORLD WARRIOR

CAPCOM

■ Capcom's epoch-making fighter reinvigorated both the fighting genre and the arcade scene, thanks to its distinctive brawlers and excellent fighting engine,



SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

SONIC TEAM

■ Sega's attitude-laden answer to Mario highlighted the power of its 16-bit console and paved the way for a slew of copycat anthropomorphic clones.



NEVERWINTER NIGHTS

BEYOND SOFTWARE

■ Don Daglow's online take on *Dungeons & Dragons* grew alongside its dedicated community, leading to it becoming part of AOL's popular subscription service.



STARBLADE

NAMCO

■ The cutting-edge visuals and bold, brash spectacle of *Starblade* proved that arcades could still offer exhilarating experiences that weren't available elsewhere.



ANOTHER WORLD

DELPHINE SOFTWARE

■ Eric Chahi's ambitious and influential adventure set new standards at the time, thanks to its well-observed cutscenes, clever puzzles and innovative mechanics.



MICRO MACHINES

CODEMASTERS

■ Originating on the NES, Codemasters' inventive top-down party game turned a conventional home and its everyday objects into thrilling racing circuits.



SID MEIER'S CIVILIZATION

MICROPROSE

■ Why build a city when you can create an empire? Sid Meier's strategy gem set an industry standard, even if it would significantly evolve with its sequels.



ROAD RASH

ELECTRONIC ARTS

■ EA's vehicular combat game saw gamers trading punches, upgrading their bikes and outracing the police as they careened through the detailed Californian countryside.



DEFINING GAMES!

SUPER MARIO KART

NINTENDO EAD

■ Originally planned as a two-player *F-Zero*, *Super Mario Kart* effortlessly highlighted the versatility of Nintendo's everyman plumber and helped create a new subgenre.



DESERT STRIKE

ELECTRONIC ARTS

■ Subtitled *Return To The Gulf*, Mike Posehn's lack of videogame experience didn't stop him from crafting a shooter that was as acclaimed as it was controversial.



NIGHT TRAP

DIGITAL PICTURES

■ As ambitious as it is flawed, *Night Trap* might not have elevated early FMV games, but it was instrumental in helping to create gaming's current rating system.



VIRTUA RACING

SEGA AM2

■ Although it wasn't first off the grid, AM2's magnificent polygon-based racer offered a sense of life-like realism that few other racing games could match.



ALONE IN THE DARK

INFOGRAMES

■ Inspired by the works of Edgar Allan Poe and HP Lovecraft, Frederick Raynal's period-based yarn dabbled with survival horror, long before Capcom coined the term.



CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER

INTELEK

■ Kevin Toms scored first, but the Collyer brothers' own take on the beautiful game found much greater success and rewrote the armchair footballer rulebook.



WOLFENSTEIN 3D

ID SOFTWARE

■ By revitalising a beloved stealth game, id helped lay the blueprints for one of gaming's biggest genres, while also giving the world a mechanically augmented Hitler.



DUNE II: THE BUILDING OF A DYNASTY

WESTWOOD STUDIOS

■ As influential as the in-game spice your vehicle harvests, Westwood's game laid much of the groundwork for the modern RTS genre, but it wouldn't perfect it...



STREETS OF RAGE 2

SEGA CS2

■ Sega's mighty sequel introduced new characters, new moves and offered a bone-crunching fighting engine that even arcade contemporaries rarely bettered.



» [Arcade] Buckets of blood made *Mortal Kombat* a target of self-appointed moral guardians.

1992



» [Mega Drive] The massive launch of *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* was enough to earn TV news coverage.

Could videogames be harming kids? People genuinely started to ask this question, thanks to the rise of games that combined violent themes with digitised images of real people, such as the arcade hits *Lethal Enforcers* and *Mortal Kombat*. That bloody brawler had plenty of competition from *Art Of Fighting*, *Fatal Fury II* and *World Heroes* as the fighting genre continued to heat up.

1992 was a banner year for fans of point-and-click adventures, thanks to games like *Dune*, *Indiana Jones And The Fate Of Atlantis*, *Lure Of The Temptress* and *Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge*. Other home-computer hits this year included the shoot-'em-up *Apidya*, *Pinball Dreams* and the mighty *Sensible Soccer*. The next generation Amiga 1200 was also introduced this year (while the ZX Spectrum was officially retired), but by this point the IBM-compatible PC was dominating the computer market.

What's more, this was the year that console games overtook computer games in the UK market. The Mega Drive's strong year included games like *Alisia Dragoon*, *Flashback*, *Kid Chameleon* and *Ecco The Dolphin* and was capped off with the blockbuster launch of *Sonic 2*. *Contra III: The Alien Wars*, *Super Aleste* and *Super Star Wars* were a few of the titles that delighted SNES owners, while *Dragon Quest V* and *Final Fantasy V* were both making a big splash in Japan.

The Game Boy received the platformers *Super Mario Land 2: 6 Golden Coins* and *Kirby's Dream Land*, while *Shinobi II: The Silent Fury* and *Defenders Of Oasis* were the year's highlights on the Game Gear. Lynx owners enjoyed games like *Toki* and *Switchblade II*. In the world of CD-ROM games, a glut of newly possible FMV-based games proliferated, including *Sewer Shark*, the *Make My Video* series and conversions of Eighties laserdisc arcade games like *Cobra Command*. However, it was *Night Trap* that gained the most attention – once again, by way of controversy over violence.

The popularity of gaming invaded other media as well, with the TV shows *GamesMaster* and *Bad Influence* debuting this year to great acclaim.

TOM ZITO ON THE RISE OF FMV GAMES



"As Andy Warhol wisely noted, "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." Inversely, Digital Pictures was world-famous for about 15 minutes in the Nineties, simply because we were trying something new: FMV gaming. It was fun while it lasted but, like everyone else, even we realised the gaming limitations imposed by shooting film were incompatible with great gameplay. Hence the demise of the format and, sadly, the company. That said, I'm still amazed and flattered when a random person hears my name and starts to talk about how *Night Trap* changed their life..."



[Amiga] *The Chaos Engine* was a stellar outing on the 16-bit computers, and later consoles.

1993

This was arguably the year that CD-ROM games finally started to hit high gear and the

new magazines *GamesMaster*, *Edge* and *PC Gamer* were there to cover them. Mac owners got the first taste of *Myst*, while games like *The 7th Guest*, *Star Wars: Rebel Assault* and *Star Wars: X-Wing* sold strongly on the PC. *Batman Returns*, *Final Fight CD* and *Sonic CD* showed that there was more to the Mega-CD than FMV, and the PC Engine Super CD game *Castlevania: Rondo Of Blood* was arguably the best in the series to date.

The console world was starting to become overrun with mascot platformers, with notable examples including *Bubsy In Claws Encounters Of The Furred Kind*, *Aero The Acro-Bat* and Konami's excellent *Rocket Knight Adventures*. Even the venerable 8-bit consoles got some great ones, like *Land Of Illusion* on the Master System and *Kirby's Adventure* on the NES. Fortunately there were plenty of other great games to enjoy – *Gunstar Heroes*, *Ranger-X*, *Shinobi III*, *Jungle Strike* and *Castlevania: The New Generation* on the Mega Drive, and *Super Turrican*, *Super Mario All-Stars*, *Final Fight 2*, *Super Bomberman* and *Plok* on the SNES. Different versions of Disney tie-in *Aladdin* appeared on both machines, both being very good.

Strategy gamers were well catered for on computers between *Master Of Orion*, *SimCity 2000* and *Syndicate*, while adventure fans got to enjoy *Day Of The Tentacle*, *Return To Zork*, *Sam & Max Hit The Road* and *Simon The Sorcerer*. Further hits included *Cannon Fodder*, *The Chaos Engine*, the astonishing Amiga platformer *Lionheart* and the highly ambitious space sim *Frontier: Elite II*. *Mayhem In Monsterland* also delighted loyal C64 owners.

As the year continued, major 8-bit home software died off, the FM Towns Marty and Amiga CD32 repurposed computers into consoles to limited success, while the Atari Jaguar and 3DO both offered 3D games at home – though launch games like *Cybermorph* and *Crash 'N Burn* didn't get them off to the best start. Meanwhile, Namco's System 22 and Sega's tests of the Model 2-powered *Daytona USA* introduced texture-mapped 3D to arcades, heralding a new era of visual fidelity. ▶

TOM HALL ON THE IMPACT OF DOOM



"*Doom* was the end zone of making 3D games for us. We did games like *Hovortank*, *Catacomb 3-D* and *Wolfenstein 3D*. *Doom*, with the new tech, finally textured the whole environment, in apparent 3D, completing the visual experience. It was bizarre to be making a 'new thing' as each decision, weapon choice, level, was genre-defining, by definition. We were working insanely hard, in a self-imposed death-crunch mode of 12-16 hours a day, seven days a week. People had 'Doom Dreams'. I did. Your dream world WAS the world of *Doom*. It had something special, an internal, dreamlike logic, that persists to this day."



» [Mega Drive] Treasure arrived on the scene with the creative, technically masterful *Gunstar Heroes*.

THE 90S: A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

DEFINING GAMES!

VIRTUA FIGHTER

SEGA AM2

■ Home systems offered polygon fighting games first, but they were all beaten into submission by the sheer fluidity and dynamism of AM2's spectacular brawler.



RIDGE RACER

NAMCO

■ *Ridge Racer*'s sensational texture-mapped 3D visuals helped trigger an arcade clash between Namco and Sega's departments that dominated the rest of the decade.



NBA JAM

MIDWAY

■ With its intensive pace, recognisable digitised players and ridiculous number of Easter eggs, Midway's game set a new standard for sport-based arcade games.



MORTAL KOMBAT II

MIDWAY

■ Like Capcom's *Street Fighter II*, Midway's sequel bested its predecessor in every way. It also helped stoke a fierce rivalry between the two games that continues to this day.



STARWING

NINTENDO EAD/ARGONAUT SOFTWARE

■ The introduction of the SNES' Super FX chip let Argonaut greatly expand on its *Starglider* success, and brought popular 3D gaming to 'underpowered' consoles.



ZELDA: LINK'S AWAKENING

NINTENDO EAD

■ A distinct non-Hyrule setting, whimsical characters and inventive dungeons proved that Nintendo's minuscule Game Boy could still offer epic gaming experiences.



MYST

CYAN

■ Nowadays it would be seen as a walking simulator, but back in 1993 *Myst* was a gateway into another world that seemed only possible thanks to CD-ROM technology.



DOOM

ID SOFTWARE

■ *Doom*'s impact was immense, its smart level design and sensational visuals not only reinforced the importance of id Software, but also the fledgling FPS genre.



FIFA INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

EXTENDED PLAY PRODUCTIONS

■ It lacked the pace of *Sensible Soccer*, but an official licence and a distinct isometric viewpoint still pushed EA's series into the videogame Premier League.



DEFINING GAMES!

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY

RARE

■ The pre-rendered visuals, sublime music and polished gameplay of Rare's *Donkey Kong* reboot proved that 16-bit systems could still compete with their 32-bit cousins.



SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER

SENSIBLE SOFTWARE

■ A gigantic career mode, tight controls and a huge management mode turned Sensible's hit into the definitive 2D football game.



SUPER METROID

NINTENDO R&D1

■ An evocative look, haunting score, compelling level design and carefully crafted weapons created a blueprint for a generation of indie developers to build on.



ELDER SCROLLS: ARENA

BETHESDA SOFTWARE

■ *Arena's* vast open-world setting, huge number of explorable dungeons and realistic day/night cycle helped make it a believable living world that few games could match.



UFO: ENEMY UNKNOWN

MYTHOS GAMES/MICROPROSE

■ Julian Gollop's strategy epic shook off development difficulties to propel wargaming into the public eye and form a blueprint for other would-be developers.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS '94

SNK

■ SNK dug deep into its vault to create a flexible team-based brawler that not only celebrated its past, but created a template for other studios to follow.



THE NEED FOR SPEED

EA CANADA

■ While it could be considered a four-wheeled take on *Road Rash*, EA's racer stood apart thanks to its licensed cars, smart use of FMV and unrivalled realism.



THEME PARK

BULLFROG PRODUCTIONS

■ Although management-style games had existed long before *Theme Park* came along, none had combined humour, construction and finance juggling in quite the same way.



DONKEY KONG

NINTENDO EAD

■ Nintendo's own Donkey Kong update saw him star in a remake of his arcade hit, which then transformed into a puzzler that led to the later *Mario Vs Donkey Kong* series.



» [PC] *Magic Carpet* demonstrated just how far computers had come in terms of 3D graphics.

1994

» [Arcade] Three years on, the updated *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* could still draw a big crowd.

The arcade fighting game boom reached its apex this year, with *Super Street Fighter II Turbo* and *Mortal Kombat II* going head to head. *Tekken* challenged *Virtua Fighter 2* in the 3D arena, with the likes of *Art Of Fighting 2*, *Samurai Shodown II*, *Darkstalkers*, *The King Of Fighters '94*, *Killer Instinct*, *Primal Rage* and *X-Men: Children Of The Atom* all thrilling fight fans. *Cruis'n USA* and *Virtua Cop* also pushed 3D arcade games forward in the racing and lightgun genres respectively.

This year marked the introduction of widespread videogame age ratings, administered by the ESRB in North America and various national bodies in Europe. SNES hits included *Final Fantasy VI* and, in Japan, *Earthbound*, while Mega Drive players got to enjoy *Sonic 3* and *Sonic & Knuckles*, *Contra: Hard Corps* and *Streets Of Rage 3*. *Earthworm Jim* and *The Lion King* found success on both platforms. *Tempest 2000* and *Road Rash* showed the Jaguar and 3DO respectively in their best light, while the remake of *Donkey Kong* for the Game Boy was a brilliant update.

Commodore's mid-year bankruptcy saw the C64 get discontinued and signalled the last gasps of the Amiga, but games like *Ruff 'N' Tumble* and *Shadow Fighter* still entertained. First-person games like *Doom II*, *System Shock* and *Heretic* on PC, and *Marathon* on Mac continued to achieve success, while *Magic Carpet* advanced the cause of 3D visuals. *TIE Fighter* sated *Star Wars* fans, and *Beneath A Steel Sky* provided a memorable adventure.

The year ended with exciting new console launches in Japan. The Sega Saturn took an early lead with a conversion of *Virtua Fighter*, while the excellent conversion of *Ridge Racer* on Sony's PlayStation also got players revved up. Other formats fared less well – SNK's Neo Geo CD didn't offer fashionable 3D games, but its affordable and accurate versions of arcade hits made it moderately popular. NEC's PC-FX was an underpowered bust, and Sega's ill-conceived Mega Drive 32X add-on just confused players.

KEITH HAMILTON ON DESIGNING VIOLENT GAMES



"Violence was not an objective in itself in development – we focussed entirely on making the game fun. In an open virtual world, though, virtual violence naturally emerged as something that players enjoyed. Violence doesn't go unpunished in *Grand Theft Auto* – it raises your Wanted level, attracting the police, making it harder to complete missions. The whole thing was intentionally tongue-in-cheek, inspired by films and TV shows of the time from *The Dukes Of Hazzard* and *The Italian Job* to *Die Hard With A Vengeance* and *Scarface* – but delivered in a cartoonish, exaggerated way that was inspired by Eighties videogames."



» [PlayStation] *Destruction Derby* was a chaotic demonstration of what Sony's new hardware offered.

1995

As the NES was retired in the West, the PlayStation and Saturn made their way to international audiences this year, and brought with them plenty of fantastic new 3D games. Sony's machine gave us *Jumping Flash!*, *Destruction Derby*, *Battle Arena Toshinden* and *Twisted Metal*, while Sega gave us *Bug!*, *Clockwork Knight 2* and some amazing arcade conversions. Though less fashionable, great-looking 2D games like *Rapid Reload* and *Astal* also appeared on the PlayStation and Saturn respectively.

The arcades provided a steady supply of 3D games too, many of which would make their way to the new consoles – *Fighting Vipers*, *Sega Rally Championship* and *Virtua Cop 2* to name a few. Plenty more didn't though, or at least not for many years, such as *Gunblade NY*, *Rave Racer* and *Virtua Striker*. A lack of polygons didn't necessarily mean players would stay away though, as games like *Mortal Kombat 3*, *Puzzle Bobble 2* and *Street Fighter Alpha* proved.

PC gamers were enjoying the 3D revolution too, thanks to the likes of *Flight Unlimited* and *MechWarrior 2*. Strategy fans could enjoy the real-time *Warcraft II: Tides Of Darkness* or the turn-based *Heroes Of Might And Magic*, while *Hexen: Beyond Heretic* and the omni-directional *Descent* further developed first-person shooters. *Full Throttle*, *The Dig* and *I Have No Mouth, And I Must Scream* captivated fans of adventure games, while the highly graphic, FMV-heavy horror adventure *Phantasmagoria* may have made them lose their lunch.

The older machines struggled to attract attention in that climate, but still had plenty to offer. *Alien Soldier*, *Ristar* and *Toy Story* are among the most impressive Mega Drive games ever, and the same goes for *Yoshi's Island*, *Donkey Kong Country 2: Diddy's Kong Quest* and the Japanese release *Terranigma* on the SNES. *Alien Breed 3D* and *Pinball Illusions* kept AGA Amiga owners busy, while Atari's Lynx signed off with *Battlezone 2000* and *Super Asteroids & Missile Command*.

MARTIN EDMONDSON ON THE IMPORTANCE OF SONY'S PLAYSTATION



"For me, seeing the Playstation for the first time, even in its pre-development guise, the size of a huge photocopier, it was clearly going to be transformational. It was like a huge creative roadblock had been lifted and we could imagine all sorts of new ideas and immersive game possibilities. 3D was something that was previously possible to a very limited extent of course, but this was fast, fluid, visually realistic and aimed at the masses. And crucially it was very easy to program, within a day we had a textured object spinning on the screen. Everything previous had felt evolutionary, but this was revolutionary. Exciting times I'll never forget."



» [SNES] *Yoshi's Island* reminded the open-minded that 3D certainly wasn't everything.

THE 90S: A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

DEFINING GAMES!

STAR WARS: DARK FORCES

LUCASARTS

■ So much more than just another 'Doom clone', *Dark Forces* married state-of-the-art tech with a rich narrative to build the genre's first truly immersive world.



PANZER DRAGON

TEAM ANDROMEDA

■ It may have been on-rails but the dystopian setting and breathtaking score for Team Andromeda's shooter gave it an otherworldly atmosphere few games could match.



CHRONO TRIGGER

SQUARE

■ A rich story, memorable characters, gorgeous music and neat time-travel mechanics highlighted that 16-bit systems could still offer deep, immersive experiences.



COMMAND & CONQUER

WESTWOOD STUDIOS

■ Westwood's *Dune II* may have innovated, but it was the studio's follow-up that arguably refined those innovations and paved the way for the genre to flourish.



TEKKEN 2

NAMCO

■ In addition to adding new characters and improved visuals, Namco's sequel placed the foundations for the mechanics that would define the series for years to come.



RAYMAN

UBI PICTURES

■ Michel Ancel's quirky and colourful platformer spawned a successful series and proved that 2D games could still compete in a world obsessed with 3D graphics.



TIME CRISIS

NAMCO

■ A smart cover system and cutting-edge visuals saw *Time Crisis* dominate arcades in the mid-Nineties. It would repeat the same trick later on Sony's PlayStation.



WORMS

TEAM17

■ Andy Davidson's idea to combine cute annelids with over-the-top weaponry refreshed the *Artillery* subgenre and paved the way for an epic number of sequels.



WIPEOUT

PSYGNOSIS

■ *WipeOut*'s hypnotic soundtrack, stylistic, futuristic setting and challenging track design set a standard that countless developers tried to emulate.



DEFINING GAMES!

SUPER MARIO 64

NINTENDO EAD

■ Need proof of *Super Mario 64*'s importance? Look at the many platformers that followed and failed to emulate its success. Mario made the jump to 3D look easy.



TOMB RAIDER

CORE DESIGN

■ This classic Core release didn't just have cavernous levels, an immense sense of scale and stunning aesthetics, it also featured a heroine that would transcend her own game.



RESIDENT EVIL

CAPCOM

■ Shinji Mikami's survival horror epic highlighted the continuing maturity of console games, and sowed the seeds for a string of terrifically terrifying sequels.



POKÉMON RED & GREEN

GAME FREAK

■ A desire to explore and capture weird little critters and let them loose in one-on-one battles created a cultural phenomenon and a string of copycat clones.



PARAPPA THE RAPPER

NANA-ON SHA

■ The combo of developer Masaya Matsuura and artist Rodney Greenblat led to a fusion of art and sound that laid the foundations for the rhythm action subgenre.



QUAKE

ID SOFTWARE

■ Extensive multiplayer options and sensational graphics saw id Software redefine the first-person shooter and set new standards that evolved the genre.



NIGHTS: INTO DREAMS

SONIC TEAM

■ It may be a simple score-attack game at its heart, but Sonic Team's gorgeous Saturn release remains a brilliant jewel of creativity that's never been bested.



WAVE RACE 64

NINTENDO EAD

■ We'll obviously mention *Wave Race 64*'s stunning water physics, but its meticulous controls, challenging AI and great track design also made it a standard bearer.



METAL SLUG

NAZCA CORPORATION

■ As developers continued to push polygons in arcades, Nazca hit back with an outrageous pixel-art shooter that was as gorgeous to look at as it was tough to play.



» [Nintendo 64] The 3D worlds in games like *Pilotwings 64* felt like a huge step forward.

» [Arcade] *Scud Race* looked like absolutely nothing else back in the mid-Nineties

1996

The long-awaited Nintendo 64 arrived in Japan and North America, and brought with it some expertly crafted 3D games – not just the widely celebrated *Super Mario 64*, but games like *Pilotwings 64* and *Mario Kart 64*. Despite that, Nintendo hadn't abandoned the SNES, sending it off with a strong line-up of games including *Super Mario RPG*, *Kirby's Fun Pak*, *Donkey Kong Country 3* and an astonishing conversion of *Street Fighter Alpha 2*.

Sega's commitment to the Mega Drive wasn't as strong, with *Sonic 3D: Flickies' Island* being the most notable release of the year. Sega also retired the Master System in Europe. However, the Saturn received some great games including *Guardian Heroes*, *Panzer Dragoon II Zwei* and *Dragon Force*. The PlayStation pulled ahead of the competition thanks to the likes of the superb platformer *Crash Bandicoot*, *Formula 1*, *WipEout 2097* and *Twisted Metal: World Tour*, supported by cult favourites like the RPG *Revelations: Persona*. Meanwhile, The 3DO Company transitioned out of hardware and Atari transitioned out of gaming altogether, discontinuing the Jaguar and merging its operations with a hard-disk manufacturer.

Over on the PC, first-person shooters were decidedly in vogue. *Duke Nukem 3D* incorporated plenty of humour, id Software supplemented *Quake* with *Final Doom* and *Terra Nova: Strike Force Centauri* was critically successful but commercially unprofitable. Virgin's *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*, *Heroes Of Might & Magic II* and *Master Of Orion II* made for a trio of excellent strategy sequels, and BioWare debuted with *Shattered Steel*, a mech simulator.

In the arcades, *Virtua Fighter 3* and *Scud Race* on Sega's Model 3 board pushed the boundaries of graphics technology, but at an exceptionally high cost. *Dead Or Alive* and *X-Men Vs Street Fighter* were favoured by the fighting fraternity, *GTI Club's* multi-route racing was top notch and *Neo Turf Masters* was a surprisingly thrilling golf game. The most striking cabinet of the year, though? That was Namco's pedal-powered *Prop Cycle*, a flying-bike score-attack game.

GAUTN RUMMERY ON THE RISE OF 3D



"Although there were some pioneering 3D games on PC, it wasn't until the arrival of the first 3D consoles in the mid-nineties that 3D gaming really took off. This is because they had the dedicated 3D hardware, whilst around this time the first wave of GPUs for PCs started to appear. The switch from 2D to 3D games represented a huge leap in what could be done with entirely new genres like FPSes and adventures like *Tomb Raider* becoming possible. But with this came new challenges around 3D collision detection, 3D cameras, and 3D avatar controls in general. It was an innovative time that produced many of the franchises that live on today."



[Arcade] The relentless zombies in *The House Of The Dead* can be literally shot to pieces.

1997

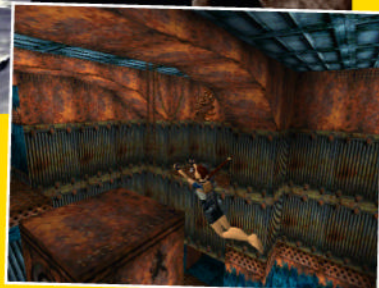
The PlayStation went from strength to strength in 1997, with original games

like *Oddworld: Abe's Oddysee* and space combat sim *Colony Wars* mingling with blockbuster sequels like *Formula 1 97*, *Crash Bandicoot 2: Cortex Strikes Back* and *Tomb Raider II*. These major releases were bolstered by cult favourites like the platformer *Klonoa: Door To Phantomile*, *Mega Man Legends*, *Einhander*, *Kurushi* and *Breath Of Fire III*, as well as budget re-releases of older favourites via the newly introduced Platinum range.

Not to be outdone, the N64 was home to hot sequels like *Star Fox 64* and *Yoshi's Story*, as well as memorable original games like the first-person shooter *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter*, the adventure kart racer *Diddy Kong Racing* and the demolition action game *Blast Corps*. Though the Saturn received fine games like *Last Bronx*, *Sonic R*, the snowboarding game *Steep Slope Sliders* and the Japanese RPG *Grandia*, Sega's fortunes continued to slide.

In the arcades, *Time Crisis II* added the fun of two-player action, while rival lightgun games *The Lost World* and *The House Of The Dead* opted for deadly dinosaurs and gallons of gore respectively. A new trend of more unusual large-scale ride-on games also emerged, with games like *Final Furlong*, *Rapid River*, and *Top Skater* allowing players to try horse racing, white-water rafting and skateboarding. *Tekken 3* and *Mortal Kombat 4* also entered arcades this year.

Over on the PC, more major sequels arrived, including *Quake II*, *X-Wing Vs TIE Fighter*, *The Curse Of Monkey Island* and *Riven*, the follow-up to *Myst*. *Postal* courted controversy with its theme of wanton murder, which gave it plenty in common with *Carmageddon* – a game that was ultimately censored with zombies replacing human victims. *Interstate 76*, another combat racer, was rather less controversial. *Age Of Empires* made its mark on the strategy scene and the third-person shooter *MDK* showed that Shiny Entertainment could do more than just platform games.



» [PlayStation] By the time of *Tomb Raider II*, Lara Croft was already becoming a megastar.

CHRIS SCHILLING ON GAME COMPLEXITY



"Complex games did exist in the 16-bit era, though they tended to be the preserve of computers rather than consoles. It was the fifth generation of consoles, heralding the arrival of the 3D era, that was the major factor in encouraging developers to offer deeper and more complicated games. Controllers with sticks and buttons meant a greater range of player inputs, also allowing designers to dream a little bigger. And, ushered in by the PlayStation's more adult-focussed marketing, the medium was beginning to reach a broader audience, with older players in particular ready for more sophisticated gaming experiences."

THE 90S: A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

DEFINING GAMES!

FINAL FANTASY VII

SQUARE

■ Spanning three CD-ROMs, Square's gargantuan JRPG arguably did more to introduce the West to the delights of the popular genre than any other game before it.



DIABLO

BLIZZARD NORTH

■ While its sequel would improve on it in a number of ways the original *Diablo* still made huge progressive leaps for the action RPG genre at the time of its release.



GOLDENEYE 007

RARE

■ Rare's progressive and inventive FPS not only proved that consoles could capably match their PC counterparts, but could also teach them a thing or two as well.



CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT

KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT TOKYO

■ It may have floundered commercially, but Konami's genre-pushing 2D adventure has certainly had the last laugh and remains the highlight of the acclaimed series.



DUNGEON KEEPER

BULLFROG PRODUCTIONS

■ Trust Bullfrog to come up with a novel take on a popular genre and sprinkle it with the sort of magic that meant even its sequel struggled to match its appeal.



GRAN TURISMO

POLYPHONY DIGITAL

■ Polyphony's attention to realism delivered a driving simulator that set new standards and demonstrated the added complexity of single-player experiences.



GRAND THEFT AUTO

DMA DESIGN

■ Its story may have followed a linear structure, but *GTA's* fusion of freedom, violence and exploration created a recipe for mayhem that catapulted it to success.



FALLOUT

INTERPLAY PRODUCTIONS

■ Like *Wasteland* before it, *Fallout* forged its own path, ditching conventional RPG mechanics for a smart Action Point system and extensive character development.



DODONPACHI

CAVE

■ While Jun'ya Ota's *Touhou Project* infiltrated Japanese PCs, CAVE lit up arcades with an astonishing sequel that took bullet hell to a spectacular new level.



DEFINING GAMES!

ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME

NINTENDO EAD

■ It feels small today, but *Ocarina's* traversable world felt incredibly complex in 1998, while its innovative targeting system made its way into countless games.



HALF-LIFE

VALVE SOFTWARE

■ Valve's debut game revolutionised the first-person shooter, made an icon of its silent hero and proved the genre could deliver deep, immersive storytelling.



METAL GEAR SOLID

KONAMI COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT JAPAN

■ Filled with masterful flourishes, clever ideas and movie-like direction, Hideo Kojima's 3D entry in the *Metal Gear* series redefined stealth gaming on consoles.



RESIDENT EVIL 2

CAPCOM

■ Capcom turned everything up to 11 for its ambitious sequel, delivering an expansive, challenging game that helped rewrite the survival horror rulebook.



BANJO-KAZOOIE

RARE

■ The inventive pairing of Banjo and Kazooie to create distinct special moves proved that Nintendo weren't the only studio to master 3D platforming.



THIEF: THE DARK PROJECT

LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS

■ *Thief's* focus on emergent gameplay, clever AI and inventive use of light and sound as game mechanics meant it pushed the stealth genre in its own unique ways.



DANCE DANCE REVOLUTION

BEMANI

■ *Dance Dance Revolution* revolutionised the concept of marrying popular music to exotic arcade cabs by turning the player themselves into a living controller.



BALDUR'S GATE

BIOWARE

■ As well as revitalising the Western computer RPG, *Baldur's Gate* proved once and for all that *D&D's* complex rules system could easily find a home on PCs.



STARCRRAFT

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT

■ *StarCraft's* skill in combining in-depth narrative with complex and completely unique factions and creative Technology Trees set new standards for the RTS genre.



» [PlayStation] The wizard's in his underwear, but *Crash Bandicoot 3* is anything but pants.

1998

» [Dreamcast] *Sonic Adventure* was a spectacular demonstration of what Sega's new console could do.

It's said that 1998 is one of gaming's best years ever, and it was definitely packed with fantastic releases – just look at PlayStation games like *Crash Bandicoot 3: Warped*, *Parasite Eve*, *Spyro The Dragon*, *Colin McRae Rally*, *Tomb Raider III* and *R4: Ridge Racer Type 4*. Any of them could easily sit in the column to the left in some years, and that's saying nothing of impressive arcade conversions like *Tekken 3* and *Beatmania*.

N64 fans got to enjoy games like *1080° Snowboarding*, *Turok 2: Seeds Of Evil*, *F-Zero X*, *Mario Party* and *International Superstar Soccer '98*. On the PC, the classic adventure *Grim Fandango*, the tank combat revival *Battlezone* and first-person shooter *Unreal* all impressed. The Saturn was even able to go out on a high with games like *Burning Rangers*, *Panzer Dragoon Saga*, and the Japanese hits *Sakura Wars 2* and *Radiant Silvergun*.

Turn your attention to the arcade scene, and awesome racing games like *Daytona USA 2*, *Sega Rally 2* and *Thrill Drive* were just as spectacular as other special attraction cabinets like *Star Wars Trilogy Arcade* and *The House Of The Dead 2*. There are delightful oddities like *Tech Romancer*, 2D fighting classics like *The King Of Fighters '98*, *The Last Blade 2* and *Marvel Vs Capcom*, and even *Tetris: The Grand Master* for hardcore puzzle fans. No matter what you played, 1998 was just amazing.

The later months of the year saw another hardware shake-up. The Game Boy Color finally brought Nintendo's handhelds out of the greyscale age, with colourised updates *Wario Land II*, *Tetris DX* and *The Legend Of Zelda: Link's Awakening DX* serving as key early games. That arrival stuffed SNK and its new black and white Neo Geo Pocket handheld. Sega launched its new online-capable Dreamcast home console in Japan too, with *Virtua Fighter 3tb* and *Sonic Adventure* doing the most to put machines in homes.

PAUL DAVIES ON WHETHER 1998 REALLY IS THE BEST YEAR EVER



"Every generation gets its 'best ever year for games'. Who here remembers 1981?! *Donkey Kong*, *Scramble*, *Gorf*, *Defender* and *Tempest*. The arcade scene was exploding at that time. A decade later, to play at home, *The Legend of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, *Super Tennis*, *Super Castlevania IV*, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, *Streets of Rage*... all mind-blowing, undisputed classics. The thrill of the late-Nineties, and 1998 as a shining example of this was owed, in my opinion, to the success of PlayStation. What Sony's console did best, versus what the other platforms did differently or better to stand out. The audience was growing, more diverse, and publishers were learning how to capitalise on all this fast."



» [PlayStation] *Final Fantasy VIII*'s American release was timed to coincide with the Dreamcast's launch.

1999

Though the PlayStation hit its fifth anniversary in 1999, it showed no signs of slowing down

– *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater* revolutionised extreme sports games, *Syphon Filter* expanded on the growing stealth genre and *Ape Escape* helped to establish dual analogue controls as the new standard. Then there's the small matter of *Final Fantasy VIII*, another epic RPG with incredible production values.

The Dreamcast arrived in homes around the world, and brought with it the *NBA 2K* and *NFL 2K* franchises, as well as games like *Power Stone*. 1999's arcade hits, like *Dead Or Alive 2*, *F355 Challenge*, *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves*, *Silent Scope* and *Virtua Tennis* provided glimpses into the console's future. On the N64, *Super Smash Bros*, *Pokémon Snap* and *Donkey Kong 64* all earned plaudits. PC gamers could experience the joys of *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, the RPG delights of *Planescape: Torment* and Sid Meier's 4X strategy game *Alpha Centauri*.

The Japanese launch of *Pokémon Gold* and *Silver* did plenty to shift more Game Boy Color hardware, with *Super Mario Bros Deluxe* and *Mario Golf* providing solid platform and sports options. However, Nintendo's dominance in the handheld arena wasn't unchallenged. SNK's Neo Geo Pocket Color had *SNK vs Capcom: Card Fighters Clash* and fantastic handheld versions of *Metal Slug* and *The King Of Fighters*, while the greyscale Bandai WonderSwan's signature game was *Gunpey*.

As the decade drew to a close, 3D worlds were expanding in scale and complexity, with *Driver* on the PlayStation, *Midtown Madness* on PC and *Crazy Taxi* in the arcades all providing large environments to drive around without any pauses for loading. Online multiplayer games were also becoming more prominent, both on the PC with games like *Quake III Arena* and *Age Of Empires II: The Age Of Kings*, and on consoles with offerings like *Chu Chu Rocket!*. If you wanted an indication of where gaming would go in the new millennium, these were the trends to watch. *

MINH LE ON THE EXPLOSION OF ONLINE MULTIPLAYER GAMES



"My first multiplayer PVP experience was with the original *Doom*. I remember how incredibly novel it was to be able to play against another human player. It offered an experience unlike any single-player game could offer because of how unpredictable it felt. From that point on, the game industry shifted and we saw an onslaught of multiplayer titles flood the market. Some of my favourites were all of the *Doom/Quake* games, as well as the entire library of 3D Realms games such as *Blood*, *Duke Nukem* etc. Online games really shifted the industry and kick-started the careers of many aspiring game developers like myself."



» [PC] *Quake III Arena* was far more focussed on online multiplayer than its predecessors had been.

THE 90S: A DECADE OF DEFINITIVE GAMES!

DEFINING GAMES!

SYSTEM SHOCK 2

IRRATIONAL GAMES/LOOKING GLASS STUDIOS

■ A hybridisation of genres, atmospheric setting and clever ways of telling its narrative led to critical acclaim and influencing the likes of *BioShock* and *Prey*.



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT

BLACK ISLE STUDIOS

■ *Planescape*'s terrific writing, complex characters and masterful storytelling set a new standard of excellence for *D&D* adaptations and Western RPGs in general.



MEDAL OF HONOR

DREAMWORKS INTERACTION

■ Conceived by Stephen Spielberg, this hit FPS offered unrivalled realism and authenticity within the genre and led to the direct creation of Activision's *Call Of Duty*.



SOULCALIBUR

NAMCO

■ In addition to having sensational graphics that massively outshone its arcade parent, Namco's Dreamcast brawler also delivered a stunning array of new game modes as well.



SHENMUE

SEGA AM2

■ While Yu Suzuki's opus could never match the ambition of its creator, it still delivered an unparalleled sense of realism that no game of the time could match.



UNREAL TOURNAMENT

EPIC GAMES

■ Epic's sequel easily highlighted the versatility of its Unreal engine and cemented the team's proficiency at crafting intense multiplayer-focussed experiences.



TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER

NEVERSOFT

■ Though eclipsed by its sequels, the robust physics, standout soundtrack and varied challenges of Neversoft's game led to extreme sports games being everywhere.



COUNTER-STRIKE

VALVE

■ After starting life as a multiplayer mod for *Half-Life*, *Counter-Strike* received an official retail release in 2000 that led to huge global sales and the first esports league.



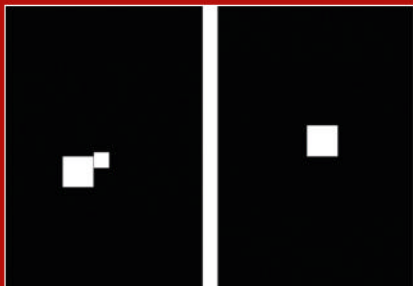
EVERQUEST

VERANT INTERACTIVE

■ As well as expanding what an MMORPG could be, *Everquest* was infamous for issues like addiction and sales of in-game items, which are still problematic today.



Hardware Heaven



ESSENTIAL GAME

Tennis

This is a simple rendition of the sport, but perhaps the most consequential Odyssey game of all. It was the game that introduced *Tomorrow's World* viewers to the concept of videogames back in the early Seventies, and also the game that inspired the creation of *Pong*, which proved to be a much more successful commercialisation of the videogame concept. The Odyssey's take on *Tennis* has some interesting features of its own, as one dial moves your player and another allows you to apply a degree of spin to your shots.

Odyssey fact

■ The lightgun accessory for the Magnavox Odyssey, designed to resemble a rifle rather than the more common pistol, is the first ever peripheral for a videogame console.

PROCESSORS: N/A

RAM: N/A

GRAPHICS: WHITE BLOCKS OR LINES, BLACK BACKGROUND

AUDIO: N/A

MEDIA: PROPRIETARY PROGRAM CARDS



SUPPLIED BY
**EVAN
AMOS**

Odyssey

» MANUFACTURER: Magnavox » YEAR: 1972

» COST: \$99.95 (launch), £400+ (today, boxed), £290+ (today, unboxed)

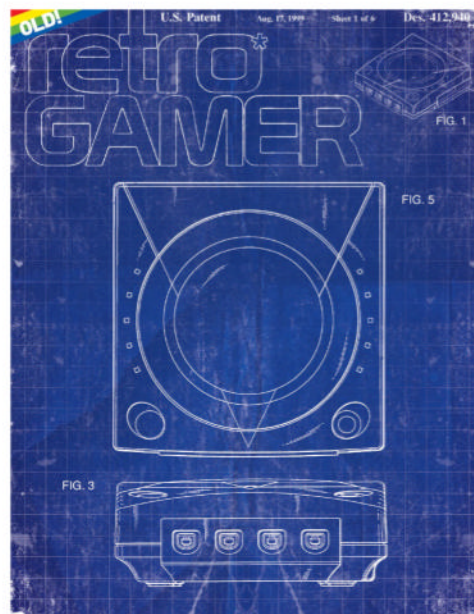
A defence contractor may seem an unlikely place for the invention of home videogame hardware, but Sanders Associates employee Ralph Baer worked on his “Brown Box” prototype for years until it was ready to go into production. The consumer electronics company Magnavox would produce and sell this invention under the name Odyssey. The console itself is a boxy device made from white and black plastic with a woodgrain trim, with dial controllers that are unconventional by today’s standards.

The Odyssey doesn’t have a CPU or ROM cartridges, and different games are produced with the use of program cards to modify the console’s internal diode-transistor logic circuits. It can display very limited black and white graphics, requiring overlays to be placed on the TV for many games, and physical pieces for others. Players must keep track of scores on their own. The Odyssey was a modest success for Magnavox and a series of dedicated consoles were produced under the brand, until the Odyssey 2 – or Philips Videopac G7000 in the UK – arrived in the late-Seventies to rival the Atari 2600. ★

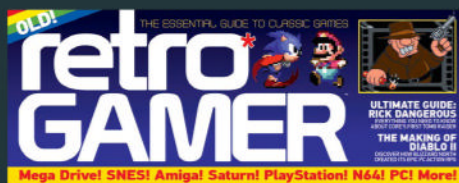


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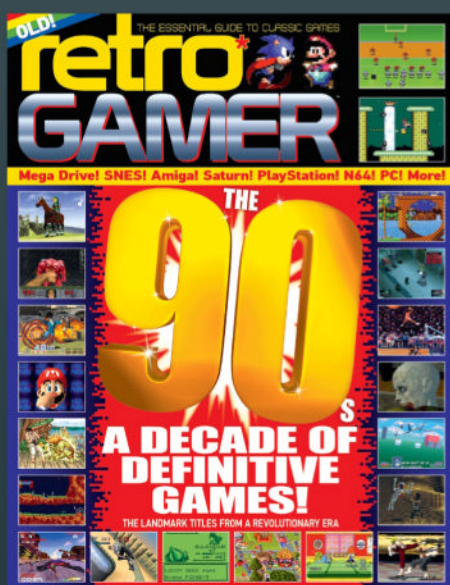
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THE RETRO GAMER

GUIDE TO...

Brøderbund



Restoration work of Prince Of Persia art by Jan Hofmeister

FOUNDED IN 1980, BRØDERBUND HELPED DEFINE COMPUTER GAMING WITH GROUNDBREAKING TITLES SUCH AS CHOPLIFTER, LODERUNNER AND PRINCE OF PERSIA. **RETRO GAMER** LOOKS BACK AT THE CELEBRATED PUBLISHER'S GREATEST HITS

WORDS BY RORY MILNE



A year after creating the real-time strategy game *Galactic Empire*, Doug Carlston started Brøderbund with his brother Gary in order to market his debut title. Further success was found with the 1981 *Space Panic* tribute *Apple Panic* and the 1982 helicopter rescue title *Choplifter*. Doug Smith's multi-system platformer/puzzler *Lode Runner* followed in 1983, as did the popular platform games *Spelunker* and *Drol*.

In 1984, the publisher diversified its output with the top-down shooter *Raid On Bungeling Bay* and

Jordan Mechner's stylish brawler *Karateka*. Then in 1985 it released the first of a hugely popular series in the form of the edutainment title *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?*

Innovative games continued to be Brøderbund's focus throughout the late-Eighties, with highlights being the ambitious third-person shooter *Airheart*, the construction simulator *SimCity* and Jordan Mechner's puzzle-based platformer *Prince Of Persia*.

During the Nineties, Brøderbund impressed with the polygon-powered daredevil driving game *Stunts*, the *Prince Of Persia* sequel *The*

Shadow And The Flame and the beautifully crafted adventure *Myst*. It then rounded off the decade with the immersive point-and-click title *The Last Express*.

In 1998, Brøderbund was sold, and by 2001 the firm's IP was owned by Ubisoft, which released *Myst* and *Prince Of Persia* titles until 2013. However, other firms continued Brøderbund series like *Choplifter* and *Lode Runner*.

In terms of legacy, Brøderbund's back catalogue ensures that it's a byword for quality, as proven by the continued appeal of the ongoing franchises that began with its releases.



APPLE PANIC 1981

APPLE II, VARIOUS

■ In a rare case of an unofficial adaptation of an arcade game outselling its inspiration, *Apple Panic* did far better outside of Japan than its inspiration *Space Panic*. To give credit where credit is due, *Space Panic* did lead to the creation of one of gaming's most popular genres – the platformer. But it doesn't require the player character to jump, so it can't really be described as the first platform game. However, it did influence the design of later games like *Donkey Kong* that have a more convincing claim to that title.

In respect of Brøderbund's homage, *Apple Panic* replicates its arcade counterpart's mechanics to a tee. The aim is to dig holes in platforms connected by ladders and then trick your foes into falling into them. Once trapped, you bash them into oblivion with your spade, and each time you clear a level of foes you meet more of them, including harder variants. For these tougher opponents you need to dig two or three holes, each one exactly underneath the others. If they aren't properly aligned then your enemy's fall is stopped short by the surface area underneath, with a result that they're able to walk away unharmed.

Where *Apple Panic* differs from Universal's arcade game is in the way that its antagonists react to the player character, and this makes quite a difference to its gameplay. In *Space Panic*, your enemies gravitate towards you, albeit taking circuitous routes to do so. Whereas in *Apple Panic* you have to actively tempt foes towards the holes you've dug by getting as close as possible to them while avoiding their deadly touch. If you keep your distance they ignore you, spending their time on platforms and ladders far from your position. These considerations introduce strategy into the Brøderbund release that was never there in its arcade inspiration, which may go some way to explaining why *Apple Panic* was a hit in the US despite being based on a coin-op that went almost unnoticed in American arcades.



CHOPFLIFTER 1982

APPLE II, VARIOUS

■ You only have to look at how many systems Dan Gorlin's *Choplifter* was adapted for to realise the scale of its success. The side-on helicopter shooter was first developed for the Apple II, but it ended up on more than a dozen other systems. It's probably unfair to call *Choplifter* a shooter, as there are only occasional situations where you need to shoot things down. More specifically, there are enemy jets that patrol the skies, and you have to blast them out of the air before they do the same to you. Jets aside, you're far more likely to bomb targets in the form of tanks. This greater focus on fighting ground forces has a knock-on effect on your second goal in *Choplifter*, which is the rescue of hostages that are being held captive in enemy territory. You find them streaming out of wooden huts, and you have to land your chopper to allow them to climb aboard. Naturally, this turns the tables in your battles with enemy tanks, since it makes your helicopter a sitting duck while you wait for the hostages to get inside. This leads to a game of cat and mouse, where you rescue as many hostages as possible before a tank appears and forces you back into the air. You also have to consider your chopper's maximum hostage limit, because once that's reached you have to head back to base to drop off those you've rescued before you can go back out to rescue any that you left behind. ▶



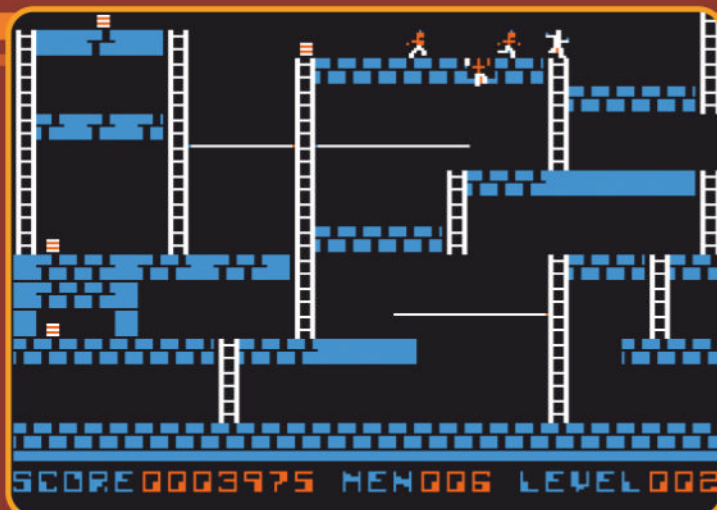
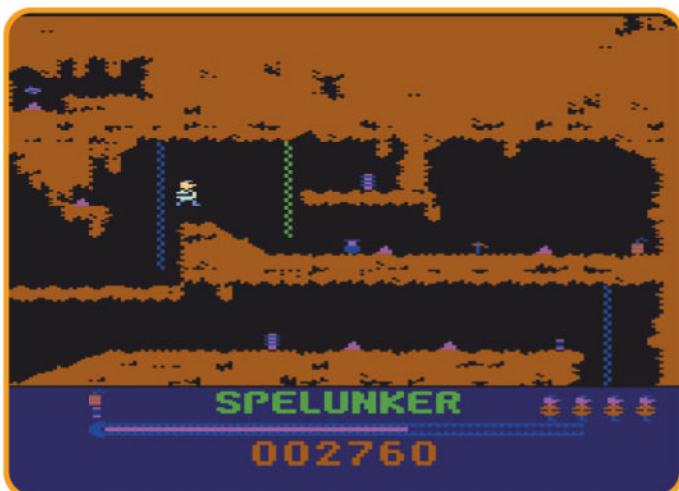


SPELUNKER 1983

ATARI 8-BIT, VARIOUS

■ One of only a few Eighties computer games to be adapted for the arcades, *Spelunker* was originally designed for the Atari 8-bit computers before being adapted to other platforms. Aside from doing well in the States, Tim Martin's ambitious platformer went down a storm in Japan thanks to Irem's Arcade, Famicom and MSX adaptations. Brøderbund, for its part, distributed the popular Atari original, which in many respects defies the expectations of a platformer of that time.

Most obviously, *Spelunker* scrolls rather than being flick-screen, unlike so many of its contemporaries. Another twist is that it gives the player the objective of heading downwards for treasure rather than upwards to the surface. The way you deal with opponents is also atypical in that *Spelunker*'s hero is unarmed, and so has to deter enemies in other ways. There are bats that attempt to drop deadly guano on his head, and dissuading them requires you to locate a flare that can be fired in their direction. There are also ghosts that haunt the game's epically deep caves, and you have to waft air at them in order to disintegrate them, although this comes at the cost of depleting your air supply. Happily, oxygen is one of the game's many collectables, and can be found lying about its cavern floors. Other pickups include dynamite, which proves essential for blowing your way through passageways that have been blocked by falling rubble. Then there are keys. It's crucial that you find these, as they unlock new areas of the game, so if you miss them then that can give you a lot of backtracking to do. *Spelunker* also has its fair share of environmental hazards, such as lethal geysers to be leapt over, and conveyors, ladders and ropes that throw you off if you don't interact with them in exactly the right way.



LODE RUNNER 1983

VARIOUS

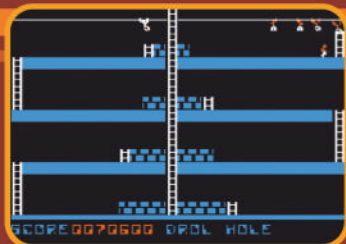
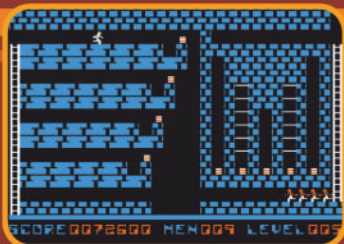
■ On paper, *Lode Runner* sounds like a lot of other games of the time. You run along platforms and climb ladders, all the while collecting gold bars and fleeing from opponents. So far, so similar, but in *Lode Runner* you do everything at speed while your foes relentlessly home in on your position. You can dig holes for them to fall into, like in *Apple Panic*, but because they greatly outnumber you this does little to even the odds. It does, however, cause them to drop any gold they've collected, which is just as well since you need to get every bar on each level to escape to the next.



DROL 1983

APPLE II, VARIOUS

■ Another Brøderbund release that has platforms but no jumping, although in *Drol* the robotic player character you control can hover as well as walk around. The idea of the game is that you have to rescue people and their pets from side-scrolling levels consisting of stacked platforms. Each of these is infested with nasty creatures, but you can avoid these by switching platforms, which is done by dropping down or flying up through hatches in the floors and ceilings. You can also blast your opponents to pieces with rainbow-hued lasers, although since they tend to creep up on you in numbers, and because there's very little space on each platform for everyone, you need split-second reaction times to make good progress through the levels. To make things even more difficult, the people and animals you have to rescue never stand still, which gives you the additional task of tracking them down before you can get them out of harm's way.



CHAMPIONSHIP LODERUNNER 1987

VARIOUS

■ The mechanics *Championship Lode Runner* is based on are the same as those in the original, but thinking that makes the follow-up no different from its predecessor would be missing the point of the sequel. As its name suggests, *Championship Lode Runner* offers a far greater challenge in comparison to the first game. It does this through its level designs, which can test the player in different ways. They may require forward planning and a considered strategy to complete, or they could require exact timing while running from one place to another with enemies breathing down your neck. Its stages are also as varied as they are tough, due to them being designed by ten different designers, each given the goal of making them expert-level challenges. As well as Brøderbund's Doug, Don and Alice Carlston, several computer-magazine staff contributed levels to the game. What's interesting is how you don't know what to expect from stage to stage in the way that you do when you play Doug Smith's original. Very often in *Championship Lode Runner* you're working out a strategy seconds before having to implement it, as there are no safe spaces to collect your thoughts.



RAID ON BUNGELING BAY 1987

C64, VARIOUS

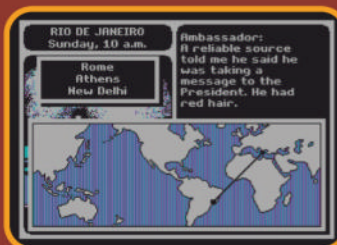
■ There's a lot going on in Brøderbund's top-down helicopter title. Although it's fundamentally a shoot-'em-up, Will Wright's *Raid On Bungeling Bay*'s sprawling, scrolling world gives you a fair bit of exploration to do between firefights. Its remote islands have to be visited in turn, with a view to restricting your opponents' evolving military capabilities by dropping bombs on arms factories. If you spend too much time on any one island, however, then the factories on the other islands start churning out jets, missiles and battleships by the dozen. Worse still, small boats travel between the islands, taking surplus supplies from one to another. Lastly, there's an aircraft carrier where you get your helicopter repaired and replenish its supply of bombs. If you spend too long away from it your enemies start attacking it, and if you don't defend it then it gets blown out of the water. All of which places a greater emphasis on strategising than exercising your trigger finger.



KARATEKA 1987

APPLE II, VARIOUS

■ Although *Karateka* is a side-scrolling beat-'em-up, that description doesn't really do it justice. The most obvious aspect of the game that differentiates it from contemporary brawlers is the ongoing narrative of its hero's quest to rescue a princess from a warlord's fortress. There's nothing special about the premise, but the sense of immersion achieved through the telling is impressive. *Karateka*'s cutscenes play out between battles like a silent movie, with dramatic posturing and music drawing the player into its story. The game's combat is equally sophisticated, both aesthetically and mechanically. Its sprites are the product of rotoscoping – a process where frames of film are pixelated, which results in smooth, convincing character movement. Mechanically, the game's battles require you to gain ground between bouts by running towards the level exit as your opponent charges towards you in order to keep you as far from it as possible. When you meet, you fight, but even then your rival tries to drive you back and away from your goal. Further depth is created by eagles attacking you and portcullises dropping as you pass under them.



WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO? 1985

VARIOUS

■ Educational games of the Eighties often failed on both fronts; their entertainment value was doubtful given their lack of original or compelling gameplay, and their educational content was slight and felt like it had been awkwardly added as an afterthought. By comparison, *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?* is both highly playable and innovative, and educates without the player even being aware of being taught. Brøderbund took years to develop the game, and it shows. Where it shines is in its implementation of the challenge it sets. You have to track down a gang of thieves led by the titular Carmen Sandiego, starting with her crew and then ultimately their boss. This requires investigation on a global scale against the clock – if you take too long you lose the trail of the crook that you're after. You question the locals in each country you visit, and based on their responses you have to guess which country your suspect has fled to. This requires geographical knowledge found in an almanac that comes with the game, with the research done and facts found providing the title's learning element.



AIRHEART 1986

APPLE II

■ The fact *Airheart* runs on a 128KB Apple II is nothing short of amazing. Dan Gorlin's third-person-perspective shooter uses high-res multicoloured scaled sprites that whiz around at top speed, giving you an impressive sensation of motion. The action takes place out at sea, where you guide a jet-propelled device into enemy territories. Your robotic opponents are found in groups near buoys, and once shot they leave behind a pod that you have to collect before it regenerates itself back into a droid. Once you clear an area you claim a magical item and move onto the next, where you meet increasingly dangerous foes with better offensive capabilities.



WINGS OF FURY 1987

APPLE II, VARIOUS

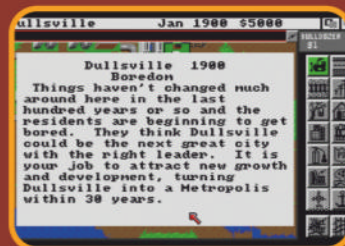
■ *Wings Of Fury* puts you in charge of an American fighter plane in combat with the Japanese air force during World War II. Each flight begins on a battleship floating on the Pacific, where you choose the secondary weapon that best suits your chosen mission. You might need to take out fixed guns with a bombing run over a jungle, or there might be enemy battleships in the area that can only be destroyed with torpedoes launched from close range. Later levels involve both of these challenges and more, and so require you to return to base for repairs, refuelling and to switch weapons between sorties.



TYPHOON THOMPSON IN SEARCH FOR THE SEA CHILD 1988

ATARI ST, AMIGA

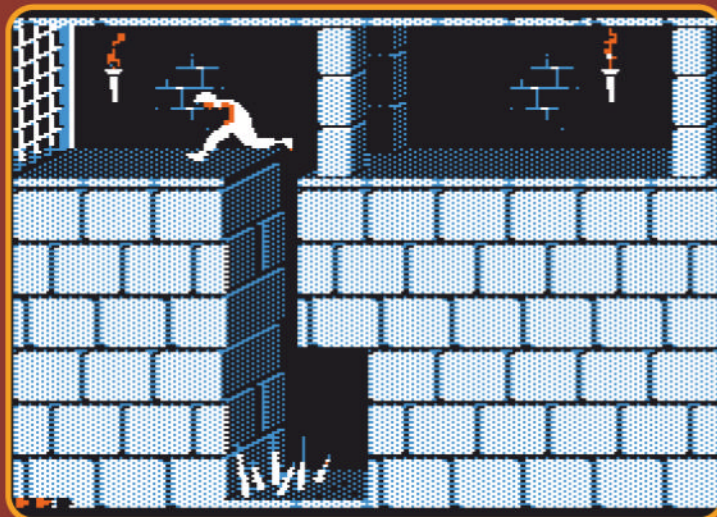
■ Although it's closer to what Dan Gorlin wanted to achieve with *Airheart* but couldn't due to technical limitations, the 16-bit *Typhoon Thompson* nevertheless improves on its predecessor's aesthetics and enhances its gameplay. There are no underwater challenges or islands linked by tunnels as he originally envisaged, but he implemented several new mechanics. Most noticeably, *Typhoon Thompson* introduces a gradually changing day/night cycle that helps the player keep note of the time taken to clear levels. This affects your score, so it's a helpful visual aid to have. There are also four distinct weapons that you earn as you make progress, whereas in the original you just got a laser cannon. Lastly, there are amusing pre-game animations showing a reluctant Typhoon Thompson being persuaded to accept the game's challenge.



SIMCITY 1989

VARIOUS

■ At its core, the challenge set by *SimCity* is to design and build a successful city. This is done by dragging and dropping icons representing houses, power plants, public services and so on onto an overhead city map. All of the complications and potential pitfalls involved with developing a city in real life are incorporated into the game, and there are also fantasy situations to contend with, such as attacks by Godzilla. You also have the option of playing time-limited, goal-orientated scenarios, some of which are based on historical events like the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.



PRINCE OF PERSIA 1989

APPLE II, VARIOUS

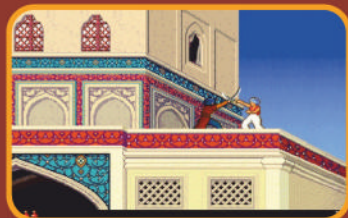
■ There's a clever mix of genres in Jordan Mechner's *Prince Of Persia*. It's part platformer, part puzzler and part slash-'em-up, and each of these genres are introduced gradually and then layered to create hybrid challenges. *Prince Of Persia*'s medieval Middle Eastern dungeon and tower levels are filled with traps, hazards and guards that the player has to overcome. Traps can sometimes be bypassed with platforming skill – for instance, there are gaps over steep falls and spikes that have to be leapt over from just the right distance away. But other times traps can involve a puzzle of some sort. For example, a portcullis might temporarily raise when you stand on a remote pressure point, giving you a chance to run under it before it falls on your head. Hazards can include climbing up or down to other levels without falling off, rocks that come tumbling down on top of you and passageway-blocking guillotines that snap open and shut in quick succession. The guards in *Prince Of Persia* are armed with swords, but they don't appear very often at the start of the game. This is just as well, since you don't have a sword of your own until you find one towards the end of the first level. Once you have it you can engage the guards in sword fights. As with falling foul of traps and hazards, taking damage from the guards costs you lives, although drinking red potions found lying around the stages restores these.



STUNTS 1990

PC, VARIOUS

Clearly influenced by the Atari coin-op *Hard Drivin'*, *Stunts* is a polygon-powered daredevil racing game with an emphasis on insane courses. As well as loop-the-loops and jumps over buildings, it invites the player to negotiate corkscrews and extreme banked corners. You get the option of racing the clock to beat your best time or against a choice of six different opponents. *Stunts* lets you drive 11 different models of cars – both manual and automatic. Unlike arcade racers, crashing your vehicle doesn't simply incur a time penalty. Instead it's race over, which adds a pinch of realism to proceedings. On that note, the type of surface you're driving on is reflected in the amount of grip your tyres have, going from good grip on tarmac then depreciating from there depending on if your car is on gravel, grass, snow or ice. *Stunts* also has a track editor, so when you get bored of the built-in courses you can design your own.



PRINCE OF PERSIA 2: THE SHADOW AND THE FLAME 1993

PC, VARIOUS

The original *Prince Of Persia* was developed around the limitations of the 8-bit Apple II, whereas its sequel was designed to take advantage of PCs and 16-bit home computers. This is most obviously seen in *Prince Of Persia 2*'s scope and presentation. Unlike the first game, the sequel has you travelling between numerous different environments, from rooftops and harbours to beaches and caves. The dungeon and palace from the first game make an appearance too. In terms of presentation, the visuals in *Prince Of Persia 2* are sumptuous, with rich colours and detailed backdrops. There are fresh puzzles to solve, but by and large the follow-up's gameplay consists of platforming challenges and sword fights like those in its popular predecessor.

THE RETRO GAMER GUIDE TO: BRØDERBUND



MYST 1993

MAC, VARIOUS

A big part of *Myst*'s appeal lies in the intrigue created by its surreal locations and oblique puzzles. It's also a thing of beauty, with lovingly rendered visuals that pull you into its strange but appealing world. It's not immediately clear why you're doing things in *Myst*, other than it seems like that might help you later on. There are numerous power switches, for example, and since they're all turned off it follows that they might need to be turned on. There are notes giving scant instructions on how to use arcane machinery that's typically all but impossible to identify; it's all very much trial and error, but that enhances rather than diminishes the experience.



THE LAST EXPRESS 1997

PC, VARIOUS

The interactive story that plays out in *The Last Express* is depicted with rotoscoped frames of film, although these are only updated every so often, giving a very different effect from full-motion animation. This feels in keeping with *The Last Express* being set in the Victorian era, perhaps because it reflects the state of film technology at that time. The compelling gameplay underpinning *The Last Express*' unique look uses point-and-click mechanics that the player uses to solve a murder while avoiding being blamed for it. The game takes place on the Orient Express, and setting it on the famous train gives scope for meetings with all sorts of colourful characters.

EXCELLENT IMPORTS

THE PICK OF THE JAPANESE TITLES PUBLISHED BY BRØDERBUND

There are relatively few Brøderbund console titles, and of those most are NES releases. Some Brøderbund originals were adapted for Nintendo's system by Japanese developers, but more interesting are the Japanese titles that Brøderbund published in the West. The Lenar-Tamtex developed *Deadly Towers* gets described as an action RPG, but it's probably best to think of it as a flick-screen action title where you fire daggers at foes and occasionally

buy weapons, shields and potions from shops. Before doing so you have to earn enough currency, which is done by defeating bosses. This tends not to pay very well, but handily enough, bosses respawn after you leave the room you find them in, so you can beat them repeatedly until you have the cash to afford better offensive and defensive capabilities. Compile's *The*



Guardian Legend has more eclectic gameplay. It's partially a top-down shoot-'em-up where you fly a ship through bullet hell, but it also has on-foot arcade adventure stages where you unlock new sections with keys, find certain objects and buy others in shops. ✨

37250

CLASSIC MOMENTS

Robotron: 2084

» PLATFORM: ARCADE » RELEASED: 1982 » DEVELOPER: VID KIDZ

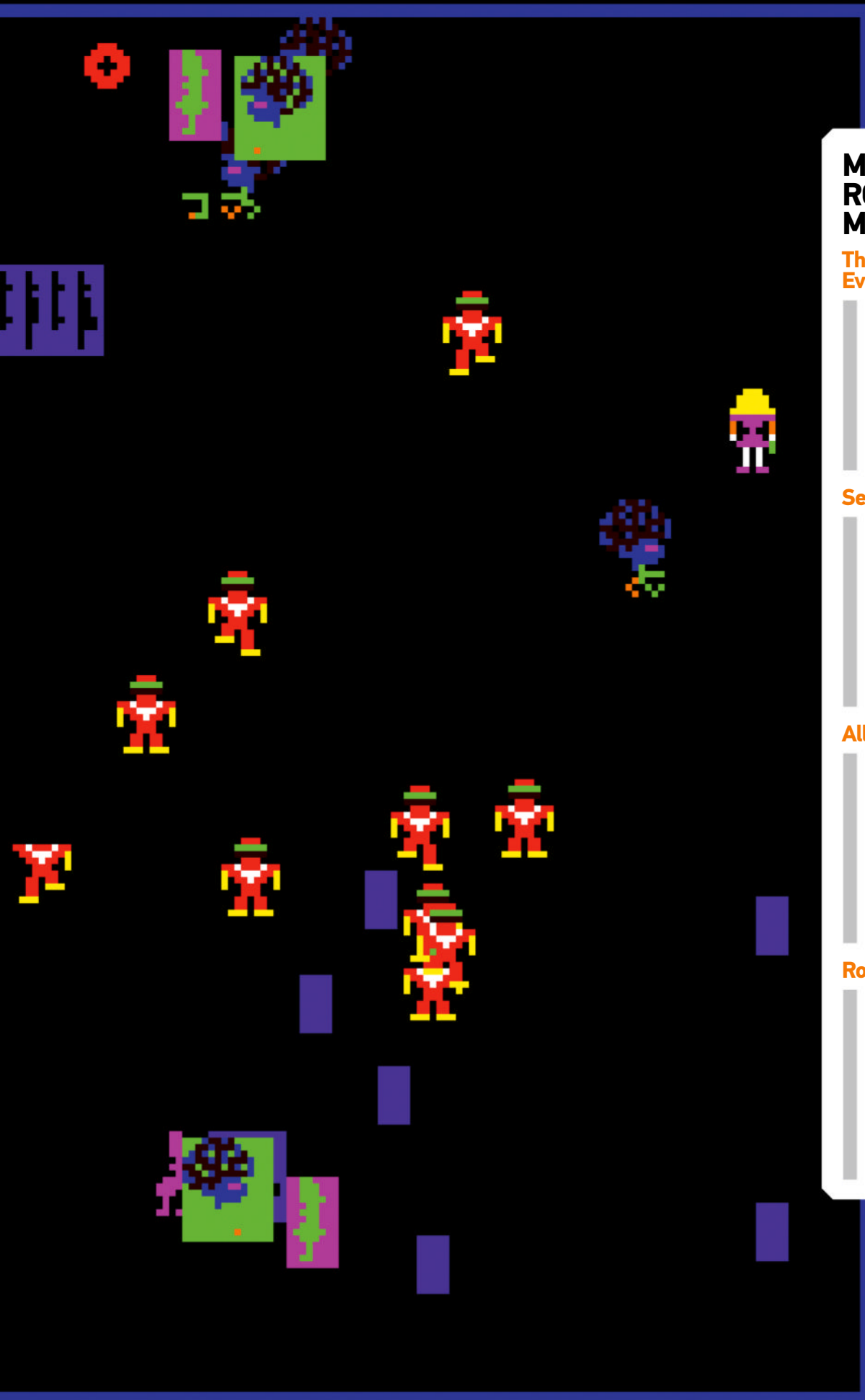
You were only a couple of levels into *Robotron: 2084* and you were already feeling the pressure. Enemies were attacking you from all angles and the onslaught was relentless. Granted, using a second joystick to fire in any direction was certainly helpful, but it didn't stop you from being overwhelmed by the sheer number of foes you were facing. It felt like the developer was out to get you and you kept praying for a reprieve that sadly never came.

Reaching *Robotron's* fifth stage not only introduced you to a brand-new enemy, but also saw the very people you were trying to rescue turn against you. Initially you're excited by the sheer number of women patrolling the screen as they represent a huge number of points that should not only send your score rocketing, but also net you at least one extra life. They even outnumber the new big-brained enemies, which further boosts your confidence. Suddenly, and without warning, the women are turned by your new foe, transforming them into deadly missiles that streak towards you. Needless to say, death quickly follows. *

BIO

Eugene Jarvis and Larry DeMar's *Robotron: 2084* made its debut in 1982. Famed for its twin-stick controls and the sheer amount of sprites it threw around the screen, it became a staple of arcades and is often cited by our Desert Island Disks interviewees as one of their favourite games. It was ported to numerous home systems in the years following its release and has inspired many games, including Jeff Minter's *Llamatron* and Eugene Jarvis' spiritual follow-up *Smash TV*. It's playable today via *Midway Arcade Origins* on Xbox One and Xbox Series S/X.

5 WAVE



MORE CLASSIC ROBOTRON: 2084 MOMENTS

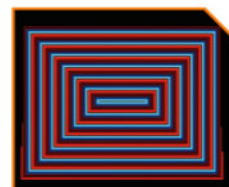
They're Everywhere!

Don't be fooled by *Robotron's* minimalist-looking visuals as it's something of a powerhouse. Start reaching the later levels and the game starts throwing a huge amount of sprites around. It would be impressive, if it wasn't so terrifying to experience.



Sensory Overload

From its intense firefights to its raucous sound effects, everything about *Robotron* is an assault on the senses. Even completing a level doesn't offer any rest as your retinas are battered by an eye-bleeding array of intense colours.



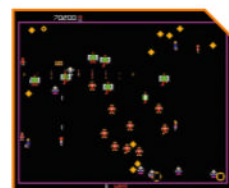
All The Points

You'll earn 1,000 points for each human you rescue and it's cumulative up to 5,000. There's something truly satisfying about hitting that magic number, particularly on the later stages when survivors are few and far between.



Road Kill

You quickly learn that while Hulk Robotrons are impervious to your lasers, you can push them back. While this is a good way to stop them from killing humans, make sure you don't accidentally push them into someone you're trying to rescue. Whoops!





ULTIMATE GUIDE RICK DANGEROUS

ARMED WITH A SIX-SHOOTER, SOME DYNAMITE, A POINTY STICK AND A CHEESY GRIN, RICK DANGEROUS WAS CORE DESIGN'S ORIGINAL TOMB RAIDER. JOIN US AS WE RISK LIFE AND LIMB TO EXPLORE THE CURIOUS APPEAL OF THIS PERILOUS PLATFORMER

WORDS BY MARTYN CARROLL

Summer 1989. Indiana Jones was back on the big screen in *The Last Crusade* and there was not one but two official videogames based on it: *The Graphic Adventure* and *The Action Game*. But if you wanted the thrills and derring-do of the *Indiana Jones* movies distilled into a single game, there was another option: *Rick Dangerous*.

There was room for this Indy wannabe because it was neither an adventure nor an action game. *Rick Dangerous* was a puzzle game. Yes, it was a platformer, and that meant jumping and climbing, but it

was rarely about reflexes. Generally you didn't have time to react to the ever-present threats around you. One wrong turn and a spear would skewer you. Another misstep and spikes would impale you. It seemed that instant death was always just a pixel away.

As with any puzzle game, there were a series of problems to solve as you navigated the game's trap-laden levels. Sometimes this would be as simple as selecting the correct ladder to descend – the one on the

**"ONE WRONG TURN
AND A SPEAR WOULD
SKEWER YOU... INSTANT
DEATH WAS ALWAYS
JUST A PIXEL AWAY"**

right was rigged, while the one on the left offered safe passage. Hence, note to self: *use the left ladder*. On other occasions, passage through a single screen involved precision movements that would make Miner Willy

sweat. Solving each problem relied heavily on recall. You would die, again and again, and each time you tried not to repeat the same perfectly plausible mistake.

Such gameplay was divisive. Some enjoyed the challenge, with the sense of



AMMO CRATE



ARMED SOLDIER



EGYPTIAN WARRIOR



GENERAL



BAT

NOT SO DANGEROUS

TIPS TO MAKE YOUR LIFE (A TINY BIT) EASIER

STICK IT TO 'EM

■ Rick's stick doesn't do much, beyond stunning enemies for a second (note that, exclusively on the C64, you can pass through stunned enemies). However, it can also be used for triggering traps. If you spot a block with an indent, try poking it and see what happens.



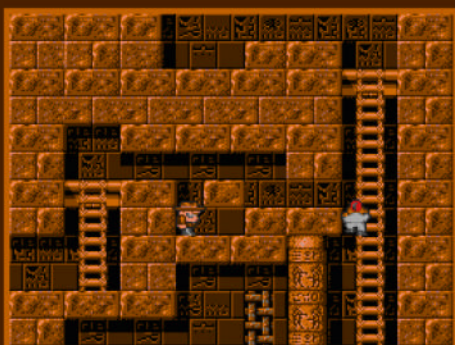
IT'S THE BOMB

■ Bullets are precious, so save them for sketchier moments and instead use your dynamite to clear a path. The trick is to stun enemies with your stick, then drop the dynamite and retreat. When they continue on their path, they'll be caught dead centre in the blast.



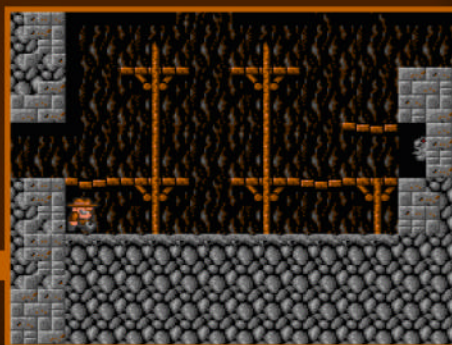
CLIMBING THE WALLS

■ If you find a ladder is rigged with an unavoidable trap, preventing you from climbing up, check the walls for handholds (these can be quite hard to spot on the 8-bit versions). Sometimes these secret 'steps' will lead you to an idol or other collectable item.



BLOCK BOTHER

■ Some of the blocks have a life of their own. If one is blocking your way, and you'd tried prodding it, shooting it and blowing it up, look for a switch that might move it. Alternatively, you may just need to wait. Some blocks will magically move after 30 seconds or so.



PING IT OVER

■ If you hear a ping sound it means you've triggered a bonus. If you then quickly reach another point, you'll hear a fanfare sound and earn extra points. In this example, Rick has just triggered the bonus. By running to the far right of the screen you'll earn 2,000 points.



RICK RELOADED

THE MAN WITH THE HAT WAS BACK IN A FLASH



■ The original game ended with Rick returning to London following his globetrotting adventure – only to find that invading aliens had parked their spaceship in Westminster. Drawing inspiration from *Flash Gordon* and other sci-fi serials, the 1990 sequel saw Rick ditch his Indy garb for a spandex suit and laser zapper. The main difference was that his explosives had been upgraded and it was now possible to slide them along the floor, adding an extra dimension to many of the game's puzzles. Elsewhere it was largely the same as before. Yes, there were still a billion ways to die, but the difficulty curve was smoother and it felt slightly fairer. It was bigger too, with five stages instead of four, plus lots of secret areas, and this time the 8-bit versions received the full fat stages.

A third game was teased at the game's conclusion, but in the end all we got was *Rick Dangerous 2.5*, an exclusive mini adventure for the Amiga. This freebie appeared on the coverdisk of *The One* magazine (January 1991 issue), and while it was just a few screens culled from the second game, it served as a neat coda to Rick's intergalactic adventure.



► [Atari ST] The first level is an unabashed love letter to the opening scene of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*.



GOOLU IDOL



GOOLU SPEARMAN



MECHANIC



GOOLU TRIBESMAN



GUNNER

► achievement earned by reaching the next section outweighing the frustration suffered in getting there. Others disliked what was effectively a giant memory test. But love it or hate it, few could deny the thrill of watching someone who's mastered the game by rote, skipping through the screens like they're playing *Animal Crossing*. Go and watch a playthrough video and witness all those hours of trial and error, brought to bear.

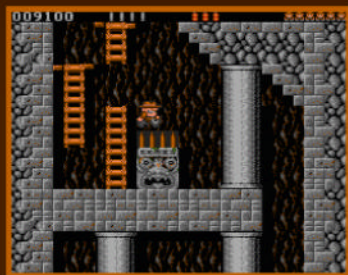
If you're wondering who to thank (or throw things at) for *Rick Dangerous*, the game was conceived by two Core Design cofounders, Simon Phipps and Terry Lloyd. Simon programmed the Atari ST and Amiga versions and also designed the sprites, while Terry created the background graphics. They both contributed to the map designs, but the lion's share of this work was done by Bob Churchill and Rob Toone. Simon has revealed that the 'squashed' look of the sprites was actually inspired by the Spectrum version of *Joe Blade*. This gave the characters a cute, cartoon look (which contrasted nicely with the brutal gameplay), but it was mainly done out of necessity. Simon knew that the game would be released for multiple formats, so rather than develop it for the 16-bits and then figure out how to make it work on the 8-bits, he imposed limitations on the original version to make it super quick and easy to port down. This is why the screen is 256 pixels

"THE SQUASHED LOOK OF THE SPRITES WAS INSPIRED BY THE SPECTRUM VERSION OF JOE BLADE"

wide on all formats, as this is the Spectrum's maximum screen size. Similarly, none of the sprites are higher than 21 pixels, as this is the limit of hardware sprites on the C64. This is also the reason why the game only scrolls vertically and not horizontally as well, as it was just easier to do it this way when considering all of the different target platforms.

The graphics still needed to be converted (see our Developer Q&A with Terry), but Simon's foresight ensured that every version played almost exactly the same. There were a couple of compromises however. Lack of memory on the 8-bit computers meant that each level was curtailed (the 16-bit versions featured 135 screens in total, while on the 8-bits there were 85). In addition, the fabulous "WAAAAH!" scream, which is played when anyone dies (which means it's played a *lot*), was only heard on the ST and Amiga.

This overall platform parity was praised by Jaz Rignall when he reviewed several versions in the June 1989 issue of *CVG*, giving them all 87%. "Barring graphical differences, the game is identical on all formats – so no matter what machine you own, it's an essential purchase." Over at *The One*, Brian Nesbitt awarded both the ST and Amiga versions 88%, commenting



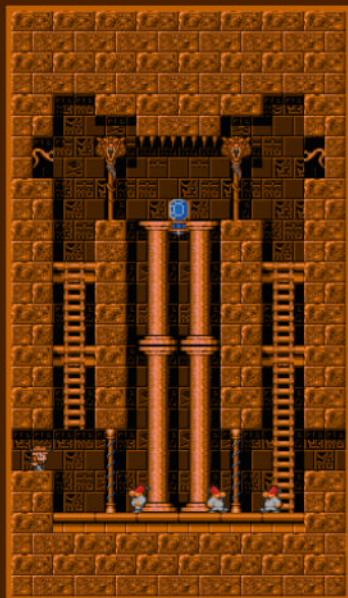
» [Atari ST] Rick narrowly escapes being flattened by a descending ceiling, just like Indy in *The Temple Of Doom*.



» [Atari ST] Shades of Activision's *HERO* here as you use your dynamite to blast through barriers.



» [Amiga] Do you drop down to the left or right? One way leads to a spiky surprise.



» [Atari ST] Rooms were usually several screens high, like this one featuring the priceless Jewel Of Ankhel.

TEMPLE
GUARD



JEWEL OF
ANKHEL

MUMMY



GUARD DOG

CONVERSION CAPERS

DISCOVER HOW THE DIFFERENT VERSIONS MATCH UP



ATARI ST

■ The game was developed on the ST, so all other versions were based on this one. As a native ST game the presentation is top notch, featuring cartoon-style sprites and detailed backgrounds. The audio is excellent too, with effective sound samples used throughout.



AMIGA

■ Visually the ST and Amiga versions are like for like: same number of on-screen colours, identical levels of detail and matching screen sizes. The audio is also carried over, although the music on the Amiga is richer and samples can be played simultaneously.



PC

■ In EGA mode this is like a halfway house between the ST and 8-bit versions, while in CGA mode it gives the Spectrum a run for its money in the crazy colour stakes. As for music: there isn't any. Not a note. There are sound effects in the form of blips and beeps.



C64

■ This is very good. Almost everything from the 16-bit versions has made the transition, including the intro scenes that open each stage. The only things missing are the full-length stages and the famous "WAAAAH!" sound effect. This is the best 8-bit version by far



AMSTRAD CPC

■ This is pretty good. The graphics are nice and colourful, if a little blocky, and the CPC's palette is a good fit for the game (particularly the Egypt stage). The downside is there's no music at all – even when played on a 128K machine. The sound effects are fine, but still.



ZX SPECTRUM

■ This is not bad. It's colourful for a Spectrum game, but the sprites and backgrounds share the same colours, so it's easy to lose sight of Rick, making a challenging game even trickier. That aside, it plays as well as the other versions, and the 128K music sounds great.



DEVELOPER Q&A

THE GAME'S CO-CREATOR TERRY LLOYD ANSWERS OUR QUESTIONS

Raiders Of The Lost Ark was clearly a huge inspiration for the game. Were there any other influences?

Raiders was the main inspiration. Maybe *Romancing The Stone* too. When Simon Phipps and I were brainstorming ideas, we were thinking at the time there hadn't been a good old exploration platform game starring a treasure-seeking explorer. With a whip. And a gun. Wearing a fedora. So it seemed like a good idea to make one.



» Terry conceived *Rick Dangerous* with his Core colleague Simon Phipps.

You'd previously worked on *Jack The Nipper II: In Coconut Capers* for the C64. Did that game's jungle setting creep over into *Rick Dangerous*? Some *Jack The Nipper II* stuff may have influenced *Rick Dangerous*. I was mainly responsible for the background graphics on both games and I liked the idea of exploring ancient civilisations. So things like the South American setting and the Peruvian, Incan, Mayan, Aztec and Egyptian influences. When I get the opportunity I usually work at least one of those into a game I'm working on.

All of the versions of *Rick Dangerous* are quite similar. Was this intentional?

The game was designed to be developed in a short space of time and on multiple machines with different hardware limitations, so coming up with a format that would be compatible across all machines was important. To make things easier the levels were designed in vertical strips with connections at intervals to the left or right of the

screen to the next vertical stretch of screens. This was because some machines could handle a vertical scroll quite well, but struggled with horizontal scrolling.

How much of a challenge was it to convert your graphics to the 8-bit computers?

The graphics were drawn for the most powerful machines first, the Atari ST and Amiga. The 8-bit machines that had less colours were then converted down

to. Fortunately, by this time we had the wonderful OCP Art Studio available on the Atari ST. Until this point we had been using custom editors that were usually on the target machine and operated by joystick or keyboard. Now with Art Studio, setting up custom palettes and editing with a mouse made things much faster. For the Spectrum graphics I would take the ST's graphics as a base and convert them to two colours. Then I would go into each individual 8x8 character block and put detail back in. For the Amstrad it was a case of 'fat-pixeling' the art – 8x8 became 4x8 – and assigning the closest approximation of the ST palette to the Amstrad's 16-colour palette. The C64 version would use a combination of some of the Spectrum graphics and some of the Amstrad graphics, with further reductions to the palette. We got some decent results I reckon now, looking back.

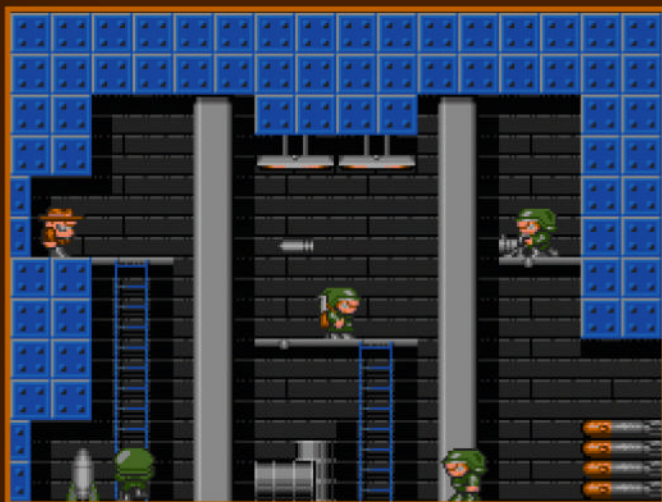
What can you tell us about the proposed *Rick Dangerous III*?

Following the trend of paying homage to old

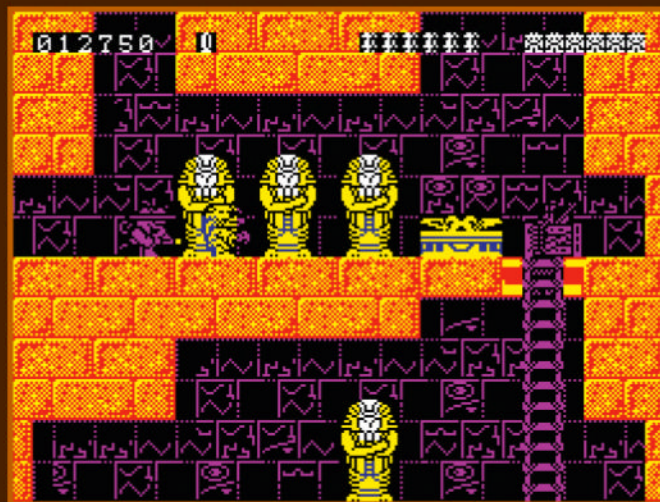
action/adventure movies, it appealed to me that Rick would go off on some monster mashing adventure and we'd have him exploring creepy castles, dungeons and caves. It would also have appearances from famous monsters such as Dracula, Frankenstein and the Mummy. I recall that Simon wanted to go down the Humphrey Bogart, Sam Spade path. In theory, whichever game and genre we did next, the other one would have followed, so in my mind we'd have made both those ideas a reality. Later, when Core started to get into console development I created some graphics for a game called *Danger Dan*. It was going to be for the Mega Drive, but I left Core in 1991 to go and live and work in California. I still have the graphics and have considered revisiting the idea.

How happy are you with Rick's legacy?

It was very much of its time. It was a memory game and very harsh with its trial and error. It has its loyal followers and you either love it or hate it. When Simon and I were initially designing the game, it evolved from what I originally envisioned. The trap system was streamlined and it became the core gameplay focus, and the instant death element became dominant. Having said this, I'm proud of both the *Rick* games and their legacy. They were fun to work on, at a time when a few guys could brainstorm an idea and have fun with it. The original gets picked out to this day when I apply for jobs. "Oh, you worked on *Rick Dangerous*, one of my favourite games!" Or "*Rick Dangerous*? Do you know I had hair before I played that game!"



» [Atari ST] The German military base seen briefly at the end of *Raiders* was the inspiration for the final level.

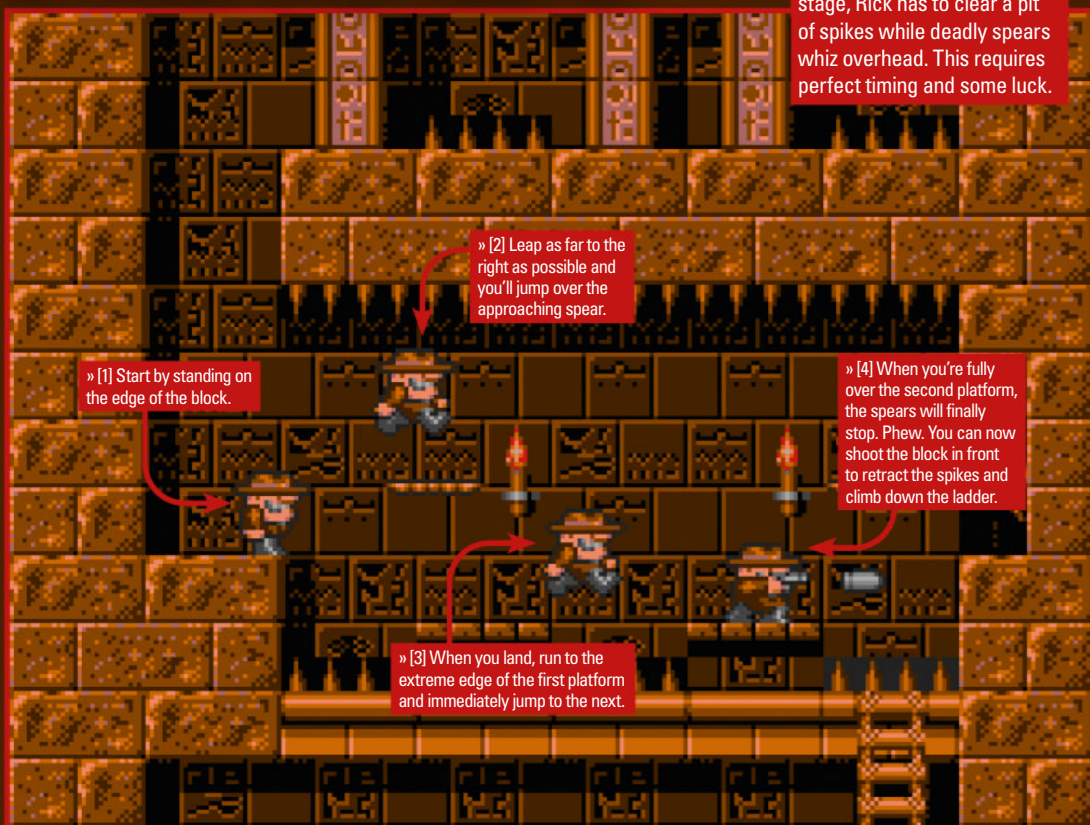


» [ZX Spectrum] Where's Rick? The Speccy's colour limitations cause our hero to get lost in the background.

LEAP OF FAITH

HOW TO OVERCOME THE GAME'S TRICKIEST TEST

ULTIMATE GUIDE: RICK DANGEROUS



■ Halfway through the Egypt stage, Rick has to clear a pit of spikes while deadly spears whiz overhead. This requires perfect timing and some luck.



» The game's great-looking cover-art was evidently drawn by someone who'd never seen the game.



SOLDIER



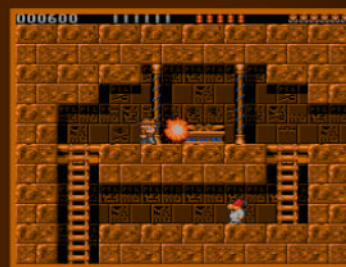
PRISONER



TNT CRATE



EGYPTIAN IDOL



» [Amiga] "It's beautiful!?" This Ark-like chest unleashes its wrath on poor Rick.

► that, "*Rick Dangerous* rates as one of the most enjoyable 16-bit arcade games for a long time." Meanwhile at *The Game Machine*, Warren Lapworth gave the 8-bit versions an average of 78%, saying, "*Rick Dangerous* is a hark back to the old days of gaming – by no means a bad thing."

Despite the divisive nature of the gameplay, there was only one real voice of descent. "Problems are usually only solved by trial and error," commented Gordon Hamlett in *Your Commodore*. "You frequently have to throw yourself into the unknown. It soon becomes repetitive." This opinion was later shared by the writers at *Amiga Power*, who were baffled by the game's appeal. "[It's] a rantingly intoxicated rascal of a game," wrote Cam Winstanley

when reviewing the budget-priced re-release. "Fumbling from one fatal situation to the next... it's annoying, tedious and appallingly hopeless." He gave it 17%. *Amiga Power's* ire was mainly due to the game's "mystifying" critical and commercial success – and the fact that the inevitable *Rick Dangerous 2* was near-identical (see the Rick Reloaded panel).

"RICK DANGEROUS WAS A PRODUCT OF ITS ERA, A RELIC OF THE LATE-EIGHTIES AND EARLY NINETIES"

Prior to the release of the sequel, publisher MicroProse did address the game's difficulty spikes by issuing an updated release that added a level select feature – allowing mere mortals to finally see what lay beyond level two's Egyptian tomb. The updated version also came with free health advice, "You are warned that this product is highly addictive..." Yes, *Rick Dangerous* was a product of its era, a relic of the late-Eighties and early Nineties.

That said, the game's popularity has endured and there have been a number of unofficial conversions over the years. The first was released in 1992 for the MSX2 and was written in BASIC (respect). This was followed in 1995 by a version for the Acorn Archimedes. The releases increased following the 2001 debut of *XRick*, an open-

source implementation of the ST version, which led to the game being ported to various OSes and consoles. In 2003 a version was in development for the Game Boy Advance and the team behind it even enquired about licensing the game from Core but were unsuccessful; it was later reworked into a Christmas-themed clone entitled *Dangerous Xmas*. More unofficial versions have appeared since, including one for the Amstrad CPC+ in 2009 (that featured the full-length levels and added the "WAAAAH!" sample) and another for the Mega Drive in 2011 which was a straight port of the ST original.

Simon has revealed on his personal website that he is regularly asked to approve or endorse remakes of *Rick Dangerous*. Alas, he can't, as the rights were owned by Core and following takeover after buyout after takeover, it's not clear where they now lie (Square Enix is the best guess). This uncertainty is probably why there hasn't been a new *Rick Dangerous* game on modern platforms. Plus, as Simon wryly notes on his site, Rick's tomb raiding mantle was passed to another Core creation – one with more elegant and saleable proportions. ★



» [Amiga] This room is like a mini puzzle where you trigger a series of switches to access the exit.

TUS: 68
LES: 00
RTS: 68

TUS: 68
LES: 00
RTS: 68

5 6809





Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles IV: Turtles In Time

A FLING YOU NEVER GET OVER

» RETRO REVIVAL



» SNES » 1992 » KONAMI

One of the things I loved about the SNES on release was the console's Mode 7 graphic mode. Whenever

I played a new SNES game I always looked out for games that utilised it and I was rarely left disappointed by what I found. From its extensive use in *F-Zero* to more sparing effects like the overhead map of *Actraiser*, developers always found a way to impress me and I was always looking for my next Mode 7 hit.

Konami made some fantastic use of Mode 7 on the SNES, from its eye-popping top-down levels in *Contra Spirits* to the mesmerising swinging chandeliers found in *Super Castlevania IV*, but one of my favourite uses of Mode 7 is in its 1992 hit *Turtles In Time*. During combat it's possible to grab hold of an enemy Foot Soldier and then fling him into the screen so it looks like he's flying right at you. It's a tremendously cool effect and I'd end up using it constantly during play. Never mind that it annoyed my mate as it would briefly obscure his view, it just looked cool and no amount of shouting from him would convince me to stop flinging ninjas.

For the most part, defeating enemies in this way had no actual effect on the game. That is until you encounter Shredder in the Technodrome stage. Safely ensconced in a huge machine, he attempts to grab you with the vehicle's metal claws while Foot Soldiers mill around and try to take you out. Your only way of defeating Shredder is to continually throw Foot Soldiers at the screen until you break his machine. After constantly annoying my mate during the previous stages with my ninja-throwing antics, I finally had a good excuse to let rip. We even turned it into an impromptu game where we tried to distract each other as we racked up points. Who would have thought such a throwaway move could end up being so much fun? *

THE MAKING OF VECTORMAN



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE REN & STIMPY SHOW PRESENTS:
STIMPY'S INVENTION

RELEASED: 1993

PLATFORM: MEGA DRIVE

JURASSIC PARK:
RAMPAGE EDITION

RELEASED: 1994

PLATFORM: MEGA DRIVE

VECTORMAN
(PICTURED)

RELEASED: 1995

PLATFORM: MEGA DRIVE



» Vectorman 2's lead artist Rick Schmitz talents have only grown over the years, he now leads InnoGames' art department.

RELEASED EXCLUSIVELY IN NORTH AMERICA IN LATE-1996 ON THE MEGA DRIVE, VECTORMAN 2 IS AN ENIGMA. INFORMATION ON THE GAME HAS BEEN SCANT AND RIFE WITH HEARSAY FOR DECADES, BUT RETRO GAMER FINALLY UNCOVERS THE TRUE STORY BEHIND THIS 16-BIT CULT FAVOURITE THAT MANAGED TO RECAPTURE ITS PREDECESSOR'S SPIRIT, DESPITE A TIGHT DEADLINE

WORDS BY LD MURPHY

By 1996 the videogame industry was rapidly changing. 3D gaming was swiftly taking over the market and developers were scrambling to stick the landing on the leap into the third dimension. In spite of this, Sega quickly greenlit a sequel for BlueSky Software's surprise Mega Drive hit *Vectorman* for the ageing 16-bit console. Meanwhile, times were changing within BlueSky as well, despite becoming a close ally of Sega Of America during the first-half of the Nineties, the studio backed out of a deal to be bought out by Sega, instead hoping to spread its wings onto other platforms. Furthermore, the studio split itself into numerous smaller internal teams, each taking on their own game.

A majority of *Vectorman*'s original crew leapt at the chance to work on what was seen as more exciting projects on newer hardware. Nonetheless, BlueSky had its obligations and a small team, eventually dubbed Drooling Dog Studios, was formed to develop one of the Mega Drive's final hurrahs, *Vectorman 2*.

While *Vectorman 2*'s team enlisted many fresh faces, a handful of veterans returned for the second go around – among them was series co-creator Jason Weesner. Although Jason played a pivotal role in *Vectorman*'s pre-production phase, messy office politics at the time saw him pulled off the project shortly after development on the game began in earnest. But with most of the studio's focus

invested in other projects, Jason was able to take the reins back with the sequel as the lead designer. He decided to run the show differently than before this time around, avoiding what Jason amusingly calls the "Moses Design Method" where the designer disappears for a number of days before delivering a game design document unto the team to be reverently adhered to as the word of God.

Instead, Jason told the crew from square one, "I wanted to

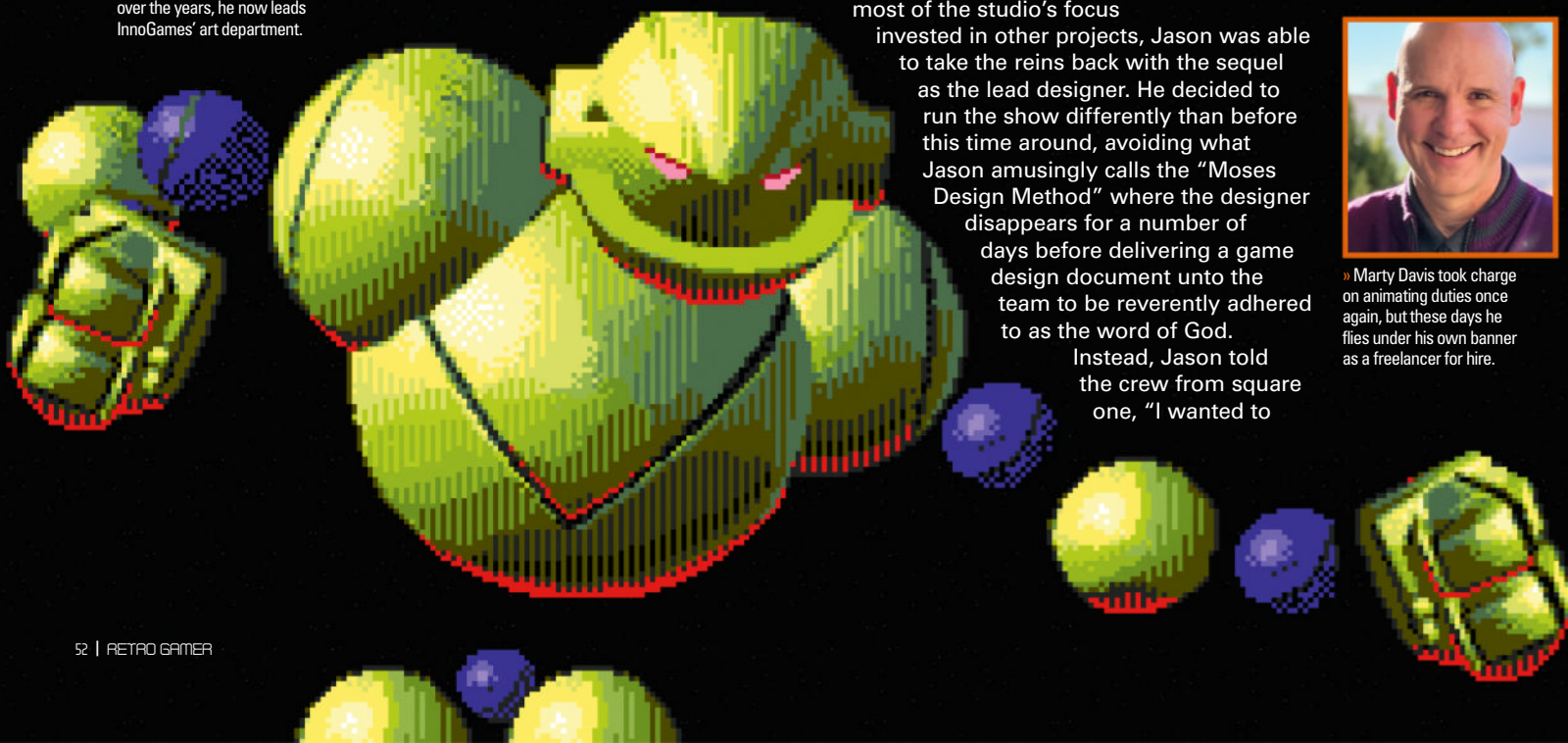


» Lead level designer Jason Weesner now helps teach the next generation of game designers at Academy Of Art University in San Francisco.

"I WANTED TO MAKE SURE THAT... EVERYONE HAS DESIGN INPUT"
JASON WEESNER



» Marty Davis took charge on animating duties once again, but these days he flies under his own banner as a freelancer for hire.



VECTORMAN 2



» [Mega Drive] *Vectorman 2* kicks off with an eerie descent down to the new infested Earth.

make sure that everyone has design input." True to his word, the team spent the first few weeks of development time together hashing out what *Vectorman 2*'s "pillars" or core design elements were going to be. Once the pillars were set in stone, Jason ensured that each new idea brought forth from that point onward either served, suited, or supported them in one way or another. Just one peek at the game's credits reveals that the crew gladly took Jason up on his offer too, as nearly everyone involved with the game earned a game-design credit.

Programmer Ronald Thompson proved to be a fountain of inspiration, sharing numerous ideas that made it into the final game. Among them were the two underground levels, Dirty Job and I Can Dig It, which required players to blast through compacted dirt to tunnel their way through to the exit. "That was something that, believe it or not, was fairly difficult to do [at the time], because it involved a lot of calculations and tests for collisions, which are [some] of the most [hardware intensive] things you can do in a game," Jason explains. "[Ronald] came up with



» [Mega Drive] Lead programmer Keith Freiheit couldn't resist combining *Vectorman* with his beloved *Star Trek*.

that idea, really wanted to do it, and performed some programming magic that made it happen." This wasn't an isolated case either as Jason's democratic design direction worked wonders for the entire team's morale. "On this project especially, people really took ownership of the game," Jason recalls. "[They weren't] only working on it, but it was something they were contributing to in a meaningful way. It was more than work for hire, it was something they were invested in."

All this good will and creative freedom might paint the picture that *Vectorman 2*'s development was a dream come true, but, as usual, there was a catch – a big one at that. Sega gave the team merely eight months to finish the game from concept to completion. Fortunately, they



» [Mega Drive] The new paintball bugs will kamikaze dive at Vectorman with their guts. Gross.

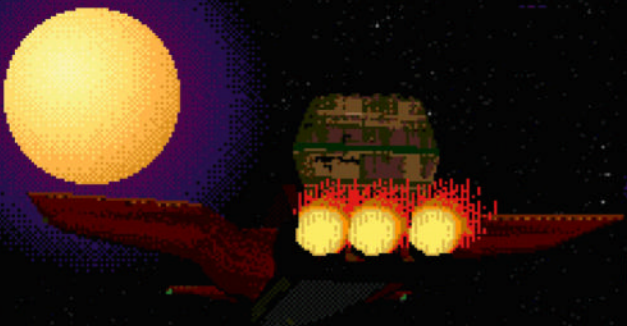
had a few aces up their sleeves to even the odds. Chief among them was that by this point everyone onboard knew BlueSky's internal Mega Drive development engine like the back of their hand. "We were a very professional group and... we were very comfortable with the engine. We all knew what we had to do and knew how much time we had to do it in," says lead artist Rick Schmitz. Additionally, developing on the exact same engine as the original *Vectorman* allowed the team to reimplement elements into the sequel, such as Vectorman's finely tuned movement and animations, saving them valuable time. Nevertheless, it was a tight deadline no matter how you cut it.

Still, the team's ambitions combined with their respect for the original game



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** BLUESKY SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **PLATFORM:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **GENRE:** ACTION PLATFORMER



» [Mega Drive] The opening cinematic features an impressive 3D Vectorman jamming out to Jon Holland's fantastic soundtrack.



» [Mega Drive] This twin-headed abomination of a boss knows how to light up the room.

► wouldn't allow them to phone the sequel in. "We wanted to make [Vectorman 2] so that people would play it and think that it's not just a quick knock-off – that you could feel a lot of the same passion in it," Jason explains to us. Regardless of the time they were given, the crew pushed themselves to add new features to the series as well as improve on older ones. For instance, while Vectorman had a few voice lines in his first outing, they were sparse and hard to make out. But thanks to the continually advancing Sports Talk technology developed by BlueSky's sports team, the sequel proudly featured a cooler, deeper, clearer and all around much more talkative Vectorman.

"WE WERE THE ROUGH AND TUMBLE MISFITS, IF YOU WILL, [WHO] WERE HAPPY TO [MAKE] ANOTHER PLATFORMER"
MARTY DAVIS

could while animating the game. One of his favourite examples was the new roller-skating transformation, where he gave Vectorman a playfully swinging stride as if the robot didn't have a care in the world.

One of Vectorman 2's biggest changes was its grittier, grimmer and more organic art direction courtesy of the new lead artist Rick Schmitz. Rick played a key role in choosing the game's distinctly insectoid theme. "It made sense as far as Vectorman's animation style of making up creatures out of a bunch of different parts... to then go with bugs, because their shells, legs and things are all different segments," Rick remarks. It was also yet another way to make Vectorman 2 stand apart from its predecessor. Rick endeavoured to design the sequel's horrid creepy-crawly adversaries in a manner that both fit the series' style as well as pushed its boundaries.

This put Marty's animating skills to the test to bring these fresh new concepts to life, "We were really trying to get away from looking like it was all [made up of] balls like in the first game. So we had to make a lot more individual sprites as opposed to just balls that are the same sprite that you're just animating [in different ways]." But the buggy baddies proved to be a tricky challenge, particularly when

Further developing the titular hero's personality was a major priority for the team, especially after how well audiences reacted to the character in the first game.

Returning lead animator Marty Davis claims, "It was a reaction to the reaction to Vectorman. People really liked his idle [animations and] what little personality came through them. So we spent more time on that." Marty gleefully layered on a helping of "Nineties 'tude" wherever he

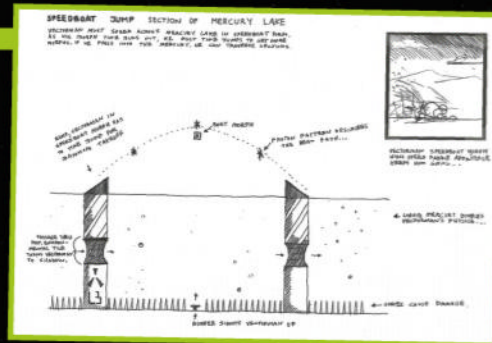
BETA-MAN 2

HIDDEN ARTEFACTS WITHIN THE UNCOVERED VECTORMAN 2 PROTOTYPES

■ Eight different prototypes of Vectorman 2 have been preserved online thanks to the efforts of a gaming preservationist known simply as drx. Most of the prototypes are each dated around August 1996, including one that's virtually identical to the final game, giving us a pretty clear picture of when it was completed. One of the most well-known features among these August prototypes is a game over screen which features a broken Vectorman desperately reaching out for help. This was cut out at the last minute for reasons lost to time, which was an odd choice as the original beta version was much more memorable than the game over screen in the final game.

However, the most interesting finds actually lie in the earlier undated prototype. While some stages, such as Night In The Swamp, are very close to their final in-game counterparts, others, like Magma Pl are

still in the early stages of development with test assets and stage layouts that look nothing like how they'd ultimately end up. Even more fascinating are the two cut stages dubbed Quicksilver Lake and Quicksilver Reservoir. These levels are mostly populated with placeholder assets, but each has the beginnings of backgrounds that hint at what could have been. Jason clarified that these stages were supposed to feature a cut transformation where Vectorman would've turned into a speedboat. "Instead of water, I wanted it to be liquid mercury so that we could play around with physics and fast action," we're told. "I laid out these prototype levels for that gameplay, but it ended up getting cut because of the [tight] schedule." Luckily for us, Jason still had some concept art of one of these stages in his records and gladly shared it with Retro Gamer.





» [Mega Drive] Give the bugs a taste of their own medicine with the scorpion assimilation morph.



» [Mega Drive] Marty, an avid rollerblader at the time, especially had fun animating this new morph.



combining traditional sprites with the vector animations pioneered in the original game. "It was a mixed success," Marty admits, "As the [enemies] moved further and further away from [being made almost entirely of spheres] smooth inbetweening [for their animations] became harder and harder, and we lost some of that 'faux 3D' believability."

Of course, the art duties didn't end with the enemies. *Vectorman 2*'s levels, consisting of swamps, volcanos, oil refineries and more, required entirely new art assets. Each level was first drawn out on graph paper before being handed over to an artist who was tasked with recreating them in the game both effectively and economically. "It's always this balancing act of trying to squeeze the most interesting variety out of what you have with the amount of tiles you have [to work with]," Rick explains. While Rick kept a close eye on the clock with the limited amount of development time afforded to him, he still pushed himself to make the game visually pop wherever possible. One such small, but immersive touch can be found in the dark swamp levels where Vectorman's power shots realistically illuminate the gloomy environments around him.

But despite the all-too-short deadline, *Vectorman 2*'s development avoided the egregious crunch that so often plagues the gaming industry to this very day. This was partly due to the team's ability to accurately scope out the project within their means, but is primarily a testament to the talent of everyone involved.

Although *Vectorman 2* has been occasionally belittled as a game that was developed by BlueSky's so-called "B-Team" in reality this couldn't be further from the truth. Jason set the record straight, "It was never like, 'Hey, let's give the sequel to the B-Team.' That would've been a horrible mistake to make, because we had so little time to work on it. You would really want the A-Team working on it if you've only got eight months."

In fact, much of the team eagerly joined the project precisely to work on another 2D game one last time. "We were the rough and tumble misfits, if you will, [who] were happy to [make] another platformer," chimes Marty. And against all the odds, *Vectorman 2*'s team managed to recapture that creative, plucky spirit that made the original so special in the first place. "That was one of the few times in my career where you had a confluence of... individuals who weren't ego driven, but product driven, who wanted to make the best game possible," Rick concludes. "The eyes of upper management were elsewhere, so as long as we made a game we were left alone. There was virtually no supervision above us as to what we were going to do with this game. We were making decisions on our own. The stars aligned, the right people with the right amount of knowledge were left alone to do their best work. That combination really led to what I feel was a pretty successful game, and certainly one of my favourite professional experiences."

Want to see what the fuss is all about for yourself? Well, *Vectorman 2* can easily be picked up on Steam for less than a quid. Game on! ★



» [Mega Drive] Much like Ben Edlund's superhero, the ticks in *Vectorman 2* pack quite a punch!



» [Mega Drive] Stealing enemy's abilities via the assimilation morphs were directly inspired by a certain pink puffball...

VECTROID?

THE VECTORMAN 2 THAT COULD HAVE BEEN

■ Early during *Vectorman 2*'s preproduction phase Jason intended to build the game around an open non-linear world that was slowly unlocked as the protagonist collected more transformations in the vein of Nintendo's *Super Metroid*. This version of the game would have rewarded exploration and experimentation by allowing players to utilise transformations to unveil hidden secrets. Areas would have also naturally flowed from one to the other as Vectorman battled his way to stop the insect queen.

Sadly, these plans had to be scrapped once the crew learned of the eight-month deadline looming over them. It was simply impossible to pull off such an endeavour in so little time. Still, traces of those initial ambitions can still be found in the final game. While the rest of the game jumps around level themes, the first four levels follow a coherent story path. After the opening cinematic where Vectorman's spaceship is blown out of the sky, the game kicks off with Vectorman drifting down to the Earth's surface. The second level then picks up immediately afterwards as the player travels through the swamps. In the third stage they're climbing up through the trees and the fourth level brings the story to a close with a dramatic boss battle.

It's a shame the crew wasn't able to keep this trend going throughout the entire game and an even bigger one that we didn't get the *Vectorman* meets *Metroid* crossover that could've been. Maybe in an alternate timeline we would've called the genre Vectroids instead of Metroidvanias, who knows?



» PUSHING THE LIMITS

Elfmania

Looking back at one Finnish team's attempt to bring arcade fighting to Commodore's capable computer

» PLATFORM: AMIGA » RELEASED: 1994 » DEVELOPER: TERRAMARQUE

The Amiga never quite felt like it was in the blast radius of the fighting game explosion of the early Nineties. A compromised conversion of *Street Fighter II* called the computer's ability to host arcade-style fighting games into question, and most of the original efforts did little to improve the situation. In 1994, the Finnish team Terramarque made its own attempt to prove the doubters wrong.

One look at *Elfmania* in action is enough to explain why it was so exciting. The background artwork is fantastic throughout – highly detailed with plenty of colour, a good deal of animation and line-scrolling effects. In fact, we'd go so far as to say that they're arcade quality. The fighters are large, well animated and move very smoothly, even with multiple bonus items on the screen. The music is good too, and the fighters have their own voice clips when giving and dealing damage. Even the game's structure is interesting – rather than picking a single character, you hire a new one for each round using cash won in fights, with better performances earning more and allowing you to hire stronger fighters.

The Amiga press thought *Elfmania* was magnificent. It earned 93% from *CU Amiga*, 92% from *Amiga Format* and 91% from *The One Amiga*. However, the actual fighting gameplay was never particularly good and as the hype has passed, players have acknowledged that – *Elfmania* has an average user score of 6.43/10 on Lemon Amiga at the time of writing. An expansion featuring new backgrounds and fighters was started, but never saw release as staff exited the project. That's a real shame – though better Amiga fighters eventually came along, a refined version of *Elfmania* could have potentially delivered gameplay worthy of its impressive technical achievements. ★



HOW IT PUSHED THE LIMITS...



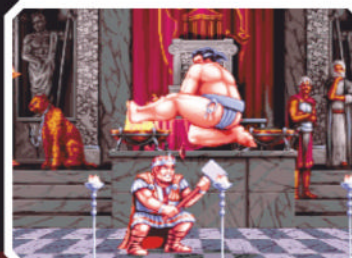
Brilliant Backgrounds

Excellent drawing, with great use of shading and line-scrolling floors that mimic the kind used in *Street Fighter II*, the backgrounds in *Elfmania* are perhaps the best seen in any Amiga fighter.



Delightful Details

From tentacles marauding in the foreground of a stage to fish leaping from the water, *Elfmania's* incidental animations add a heaping helping of atmosphere while never slowing down the action.



Burly Brawlers

The characters in *Elfmania* strike a perfect balance – they can be pretty big, they're all well animated and they move around the screen as smoothly as you could possibly hope they would.



Sensible Size

Elfmania comes on just two floppy disks and supports a second disk drive, meaning that disk swapping is kept to an absolute minimum – always a welcome technical feature in arcade-style games.

THE MAKING OF BUDOKAN THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

WHEN YOU THINK OF FIGHTING GAMES, STREET FIGHTER, TEKKEN OR MORTAL KOMBAT IMMEDIATELY COME TO MIND. BUT THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN GAMES THAT HAVE TAUGHT US THAT ON-SCREEN FIGHTING DOES NOT NECESSARILY HAVE TO INVOLVE FIREBALLS AND RIPPED-OUT SPINES. GAMES LIKE BUDOKAN: THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

WORDS BY PAUL KAUTZ



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:**
ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **DEVELOPER:**
ELECTRONIC ARTS
- » **RELEASED:**
1989
- » **PLATFORM:**
PC, VARIOUS
- » **GENRE:**
FIGHTING



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SKYFOX (PICTURED)

RELEASED: 1984

RELEASED: APPLE II, VARIOUS

SUMMER GAMES II

RELEASED: 1985

PLATFORM: C64, VARIOUS

SKATE OR DIE!

RELEASED: 1987

PLATFORM: C64, VARIOUS



The Nippon Budokan is a sports hall in Chiyoda, Tokyo, built in 1964 to host the martial arts events of the Summer Olympics.

Since then, it has been used not only for competitions but also for concerts – The Beatles, ABBA, Depeche Mode, Bon Jovi, Prince and The Rolling Stones have all performed there.

Development of the game of the same name began in the early summer of 1988 and was driven by three people in particular: Michael Kosaka, Ray Tobey and Rick Tiberi – three gaming veterans who not only had hits like *Skyfox* (1984) and *Skate or Die!* (1987) to their credit, but also had personal martial arts experience. “Michael Kosaka was very experienced in aikido. I think he taught in his spare time. I had learned some karate as a young kid,” Ray tells us. “One day, we all went to a martial arts supply store. We had a fun time checking everything out, and I bought some shuriken and a pair of sai.”

According to Ray’s recollection, *Budokan* took about a year and a half to develop, and was anything but a walk in the park – in the last few months, he regularly spent more than 100 hours a week in the office until the game was in the shops in time for Christmas that year – first for MS-DOS PCs and Amiga, then for Mega Drive, and, much later, even for the Amstrad CPC, ZX Spectrum and MSX.

When you start *Budokan*, you will find yourself in the courtyard of the Tobiko-Ryu Dojo, where you can choose between four martial arts: karate, kendo, nunchaku and bo – more on that in the ‘Be Disciplined’ panel on the next page. The realism of these four martial arts was so important to the developers that they highlighted it on the packaging. “Authentic Japanese martial arts – all arts and weapons

based on real life. Extensively researched and developed by qualified martial artists.”

Equally realistic is the fact that you will have to train for a very long time before you are reasonably confident in using the more than 30 attack and defence moves per fighting style. As the game aptly puts it, “As in real life, dedicated and thoughtful training will pay off in the end. Are you willing to endure the hard training it takes to be called a master?”

The most important difference between *Budokan* and most other fighting games is that it is not about hitting your opponent as many times as possible. “We wanted to do something new and different from other games,” Ray remembers. Instead of fast-paced combos, there are only single, controlled attacks, which often enough have to be initiated using the correct posture. There is no blood, no fireballs, no Fatalities, no button mashing; instead, before the fight begins and after each ring-out, a proper bow is taken. To quote the game’s advertisement, “Never before has the martial arts experience been so thoroughly captured on a home computer. Fluid character animation and authentic scenery make *Budokan* an elegant game, where strategy and fast thinking count for more than mere physical strength”.

There are two energy systems in *Budokan* you must always keep an eye on: Stamina and Ki. Stamina may sound like the classic life bar, but here it represents the energy of the body. When your stamina is full, your moves are quick and precise – but as your stamina drops, your movements become sluggish. If you allow yourself a short breather, the stamina will replenish itself – but this takes time. Your other eye should always be on the Ki bar. Simply



» [PC] The courtyard is the centrepiece of the first half of the game. It is the only place where you can train and the only place where you can play in two-player mode. There is also a minigame hidden in the bottom-right corner.

“WE WANTED TO DO SOMETHING NEW AND DIFFERENT FROM OTHER GAMES”
RAY TOBEY



» Raymond Edwin Tobey made a name for himself in the Eighties with games such as *Skyfox* (1984), before retiring from game development shortly after *Budokan* to become politically active.

BE DISCIPLINED

WHAT MARTIAL ARTS CAN BE USED IN BUDOKAN?



KENDO

■ Kendo began as a variation of sword fighting to ensure that students would survive the training. Over time, this developed into a martial art in its own right. In *Budokan*, kendo is highly favourable, due to its long range, strength and high speed.



NUNCHAKU

■ The two-piece stick was made famous by Bruce Lee's mastery in the 1972 film *Fist Of Fury*. The weapon began life as a flail, used by farmers, and then found its way into karate training. In *Budokan*, the combination of long range, high impact and speed makes the nunchaku an excellent choice.



KARATE

■ Karate (kara-te), or 'empty hand', originated in Okinawa as a means of self-defence for the common people, who were not allowed to carry weapons. In *Budokan*, karate is the martial art with the fewest applications – its limited reach means you have little chance against opponents with ranged weapons.



BO

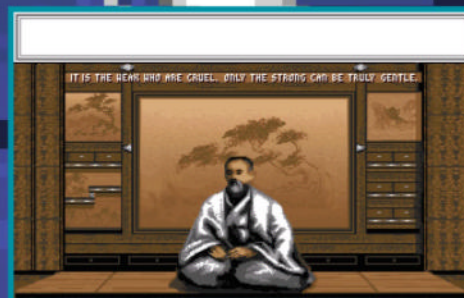
■ The bo also originates from Okinawa, where it was used as a walking stick that doubled as a weapon. Its long reach makes it ideal for keeping opponents at a distance. In *Budokan*, however, its use is limited, as the attacks are slow and do relatively little damage.



[PC] Courtesy first! Every fight in *Budokan* begins with a bow – just like with real martial arts.



[PC] Extensive training in the four martial arts is a must! *Budokan* is anything but your typical button-masher.



[PC] If you wish, you can listen to the inspiring words of wisdom from your master at any time while in the dojo.

► put, the more Ki you have, the more power you dispense. The Ki bar shrinks when you are taking hits and punching around mindlessly, and grows when you act calm and collected. This means that it is perfectly possible to down an opponent with a single, precise attack – provided you save your Ki beforehand and fend off your enemy's attacks.

Once you have trained enough, either alone against a sparring partner or a second player, you are allowed to travel to the Budokan, where 12 opponents await. And as is so often the case, you soon realise that your training has left you ill-prepared for the woes of everyday life. Your enemies fight in a variety of martial arts which you have never encountered in your dojo – including tonfas and fighting spears. There's even a ninja who throws stars and beams around the area!

The tournament's hurty dozen presents a fierce challenge. For one thing, there is no difficulty setting in *Budokan*, and for another, you can only use each martial art a maximum of four times! So you have to decide very carefully which opponent to face with which style. No two fights are the same, and each requires a lot of trial and error. You have three attempts to defeat an opponent – if you fail, you'll drop a rank and have to face the previous warrior once more.

The main problem with *Budokan*, and the main reason for its hefty difficulty level, is its controls, which are very different from genre standards. The main difference is that there is no

selection of attack buttons – just one. All attacks and defences are triggered by a combination of directional commands and holding down the action button. To begin with, left and right do not trigger movements in the corresponding directions – instead, these inputs are used to prepare attacks by, for example, lifting a leg. A forward spin kick in karate is triggered by pressing diagonally forward, then holding the button and pulling the joystick all the way back. A whirlwind attack with the bo starts by pulling the joystick back, pressing the button and then quickly moving forward. This may not sound too complicated, but it needs to be done with great precision.

Budokan's box has the following to say about its visuals, "The most fluid, detailed and realistic graphics ever created for a computer game!" That may have been a bit boastful – but it's also not wrong as the game was quite the looker with gorgeous, partly animated backgrounds



» [PC] The tournament always takes place on the same screen – there was no room for more arenas on the game disks.

with glittering water, passing clouds and the occasional bird stalking across the screen. And, of course, the many amazingly fluid animations based on video footage and photographs.

According to Ray, much of this was done in Deluxe Paint. "Dan Silva had previously written Deluxe Paint, and Steve Shaw was working on Deluxe Paint Animation a few cubes away from me. Of course, we used Deluxe Paint for all of our backgrounds. But the figures in *Budokan* were software sprites, moving around on top of the background. Neither Deluxe Paint nor Deluxe Paint Animate were

"WE CREATED BUDOKAN SHORTLY AFTER VGA GRAPHICS WERE INTRODUCED, AND IT WAS EA'S FIRST TITLE DESIGNED FOR 256 COLOURS"
RAY TOBEY

YES WE BUDOKAN!

HOW EA FORCING SEGA'S HAND LED TO A BEAUTIFUL FRIENDSHIP

■ *Budokan* was released on the Mega Drive in the autumn of 1990 – and it was a high-quality conversion: the controls were perfectly adapted to the gamepad, Miyuki Hirose finally made noises appropriate to their female body type, and (exclusive to this version) there was even a storyline! The interesting thing about this version, however, is how it came about. In the early days of the Mega Drive, Electronic Arts was not an officially licensed Sega developer for the console. Of course, this didn't stop EA founder Trip Hawkins from importing a few systems after the console's release in Japan and having them analysed and reverse-engineered by a team led by Jim Nitchals and Steve Hayes in a so-called 'clean room' process. One team stripped the Mega Drive to its bones, while a second team documented the functionality of the components based on observations and tests, and then they created manuals and development tools from the results. The important thing was that the two teams never talked directly to each other or shared their experiences; all communication went through a specialist team of lawyers who ensured that no copyrighted information was used, thus keeping the legal room clean.

The result of this complex process, which took more than a year, was that EA was able to build its own Mega Drive development kit and use it to create software for the console – without Sega being able to do anything about it. However, Trip Hawkins was far too smart a businessman to take the risk of being banned from selling software by Sega in the injunctions that were likely to follow, even if he was not actually legally vulnerable. So he decided to take the high road. With several finished games in his briefcase, he met a Sega delegation in May 1990 and presented them with a fait accompli: either EA should be made an official licensing partner, or EA could start distributing their own games the next day without Sega seeing a penny of it.

Sega swallowed its frustration, the licensing deal was done on Trip's terms – and *Budokan* was the first result of this masterstroke, appearing in stores around the world in the autumn of 1990, along with a conversion of Bullfrog's *Populous*. By the time *John Madden Football* was released in the holiday season that year, it was clear to everyone that Sega had made the right decision in making Electronic Arts the first third-party developer for the Mega Drive. Even if not exactly by choice.



» [Mega Drive] *Budokan* on Sega's console is arguably one of the best versions of EA's game.



» [PC] Each opponent is introduced with a picture and a bio. Which action hero might have been the inspiration for Arnie Gustafson?



» [PC] Each of the 12 opponents in the tournament not only look very different, but also have distinct fighting styles.

appropriate for that kind of art. So I wrote a custom editor for complex sprite animation. That was called Elaine, but it was primitive, and *Budokan* was the only game that used it. After finishing *Budokan*, I eventually wrote a completely new animation editor called Animax."

Given the quantity and quality of all these images, it's amazing that this game came on just one 3.5-inch or two 5.25-inch disks! Even Michael Kosaka writes in the manual, "I still don't really understand how Ray and Rick managed to make it all fit, but they did". The situation was made more difficult by the fact that there was a lot of colour in *Budokan*, as Ray tells us. "We had all gotten used to the lack of colour on the Apple II and Commodore 64. We created *Budokan* shortly after VGA graphics were introduced, and it was EA's first title designed for 256 colours. This made the artwork quite a bit larger than in previous games, so I spent time learning how to do advanced compression. *Budokan* was also written in 100% assembly language. That wasn't too big a deal because it was more data-driven than many other games."

The games magazines of the time were very appreciative. In *Game Player's PC Strategy Guide*, tester Gary Meredith praised the game for its philosophical approach, "If there is such a thing as a gentle martial arts game, *Budokan* is it. While other games may feature battles (or, worse yet, simple gratuitous violence), *Budokan* maintains the approach to martial arts as they've been taught in Japan for hundreds

"I HEARD IT SOLD 100,000 COPIES, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT MACHINES WERE INCLUDED IN THAT NUMBER"
RAY TOBEY

of years." In *The Games Machine* of February 1990, the conclusion is, "You'd be justified thinking that the one-on-one beat-'em-up genre had been done to death with so many similar

games around. However, *Budokan* is like a breath of fresh air. First-class presentation leads to combat that is truly a challenge to master." And in issue six of *ACE*, it says, "*Budokan* is a refreshingly good martial arts game." That was a wave of gratification for Ray, "By the time we had everything working, I was burnt out. That was the time when we should have tuned the game to make it play better, but I was not up to it. We were at our shipping deadline and I was not the only one who had had enough."

Budokan was also released on the Amiga at the same time as the DOS version – identical in content, but with slightly worse music, less colourful graphics and terribly long loading times.

Shortly afterwards, a Mega Drive version was released, which you can learn more about in the 'Yes We Budocan!' panel on the left-hand page. In 1991, *Budokan* also found its way to the C64, the ZX Spectrum, the Amstrad CPC and the Japanese MSX systems – of all of these versions, however, only the C64 version is worth a look.

According to Ray, *Budokan* wasn't a huge success, but it wasn't a flop either, "I heard it sold 100,000 copies, but I don't know what machines were included in that number." The Mega Drive version was also released on the PSP in 2007 as part of the rather forgettable *EA Replay* collection, and then again unofficially on Symbian in 2017. After that, however, the dojo went quiet again, with no further conversions or sequels.

Which is a shame, because it's still a game worth fighting for. The slow and realistic gameplay as well as the fiddly controls may not be for everyone, but the clever Ki system, the importance of every single attack and the impressive challenge posed by each opponent in the tournament make for a remarkably deep and quite unique fighting experience. ★



» [PC] The main goal of any battle is to drain your opponent's energy. Pay close attention to your Ki bar, as you are extremely weak when it's empty.

WHAT THE BOCC?

THE SURPRISING ORIGINS OF BUDOKAN'S QUESTIONABLE COVER ART

■ Depending on the version and release territory, *Budokan*'s packaging differed: some versions featured the silhouettes of two swordsmen, while the American Genesis version showed two kendo fighters in fierce action. However, the most common image seen when buying the game was that of a heavily armoured samurai seemingly about to chop the innocent shopper with his massive katana.

Not only is this remarkable because there are no real swords in the game, but also because the concept is taken from a 1942 propaganda poster by Italian illustrator Gino Boccasile. Boccasile was a big admirer of fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and drew many propaganda posters during the Second World War – including the samurai one, which was created to celebrate the Japanese victory over the Americans at Pearl Harbour in 1941 and the naval battle against the British Navy that followed shortly afterwards. How this highly questionable work of art made it onto the cover of a fighting game developed in the USA is a mystery that will, unfortunately, remain unanswered as Ray had no idea of the cover's history, "I never knew about the propaganda story. It's really weird and a bit shocking, isn't it? Why did they do that?"



Silent Scope

IT'S A LONG SHOT, BUT IT'S WORTH TAKING

» RETROREVIEWAL



» DREAMCAST » 2000 » KONAMI

The entrance of my local Sega Park is a location that appears to be permanently burned into my memory. To the right of the

Crazy Taxi cabinet literally shouting for attention, there stands a machine taking the opposite approach, beckoning potential punters over with a cool female voice. But more often than not it's in use, with the radio operator urging the player, "The police are under fire, please provide backup!" Everybody seems to love *Silent Scope* – and why wouldn't they? The gimmick of the tiny LCD display in the scope makes for a spectacularly immersive experience.

Back when the home versions first arrived, I was convinced that I should avoid them. Magazine reviews told me that the game lost a lot of its appeal without the gun of the arcade version, especially as the Dreamcast's own lightgun isn't supported. I even remember this feeling being reinforced after playing a demo of the game. But replaying the Dreamcast version of *Silent Scope* recently has made me feel like I've been wrong for a long time – sure, it'll never be the same without the gun, but the game is just too good to be wholly diminished by its absence.

Hearing that radio call brings me right back to Sega Park, and I still get the same feeling of accomplishment when I score a headshot on the truck hijacker boss. Making that tense approach towards the enemy base, with the terrorists' laser sights visibly tracking towards the camera, my heart races in exactly the same way it used to in the arcade. *Silent Scope* is more than just a gimmick – the flashy cabinet might have drawn me in, but it was the compelling game design that kept me coming back.

I never got to play *Silent Scope 2* in arcades, but I recently bought the PS2 version, now safe in the knowledge that the joypad experience won't ruin it. I can't wait to try it. ★

TOTAL TIME

03:33

CAUTION

CAUTION

Score

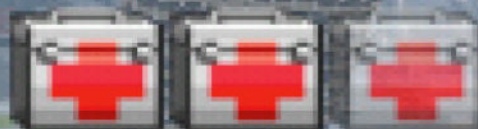
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02'21"43

SCORE 00001700

PLAYER LIFE



1.50

Champion

FE 5/5

CREDIT

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THE MAKING OF DIABLO

AS ONE OF BLIZZARD'S MOST RECOGNISABLE TITLES, DIABLO II IS THE DEFINITIVE HACK 'N' SLASH ACTION RPG. RETRO GAMER TRAVELS INTO THE DEPTHS OF HELL TO UNCOVER HOW THE DIABLO SEQUEL BECAME ONE OF THE BIGGEST GAMES IN HISTORY

WORDS BY ADAM BARNES



IN THE KNOW

» **PUBLISHER:**
BLIZZARD

» **DEVELOPER:**
BLIZZARD
NORTH

» **RELEASED:**
2000

» **PLATFORM:**
PC

» **GENRE:**
ACTION RPG

By any measurement you can think of, the original *Diablo* was a booming success. Initially it was hoped that it could sell what would have been an impressive 100,000 copies, but that number shot up to 500,000 on launch and beyond two million after its first year in stores. Yet videogames are unlike most other creative endeavours, there's no 'difficult second album' because those first debut releases are in many ways foundational rather than revolutionary.

Think of *Civilization*, *The Sims*, *System Shock*, *Portal*, *Assassin's Creed*, *Street Fighter*; countless times in the industry we've seen an impressive, enjoyable and successful debut game practically humiliated by the next game in the series. Many of the very best games in the world are sequels, and it's typically down to the fact that their creators don't need to struggle coming up with something new, fresh and yet equally as captivating as a musician might with their second album. They take the previous engine, they fix the problems and they add in all the things they wanted to do the first time around now that they have the knowledge, experience and a bigger budget. And that's what happened with *Diablo II*.

"The fact is that we thought that we were invincible," says David Brevik, the creator of the *Diablo* series and the sequel's lead programmer and designer. "As a company we had made *Warcraft* and then *Warcraft II* and then *Diablo* and we knew that *StarCraft* looked really good and that was coming soon. We thought that we



» [PC] RPGs have always been about scaling up your equipment in power, but *Diablo II* turned that into a core gameplay feature.



» [PC] Almost immediately in the game you're thrust into the depths of a bat-filled cave and expected to waste all of its demons inside. Things only escalate from there.





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

DIABLO

SYSTEM: PC, MAC

YEAR: 1997

STARCRRAFT

SYSTEM: PC, MAC

YEAR: 1998

WORLD OF WARCRRAFT (PICTURED)

SYSTEM: PC, MAC

YEAR: 2004



» [PC] The sequel was far more robust in its storytelling, but its environments and art expanded tenfold. Each hard-won boss battle was capped off with a visual reward.



» [PC] The archangel Tyrael is an important character in the *Diablo* series, but the visual identity given to him in *Diablo II* is about as iconic as a character can get.



PHIL SHENK

» Phil joined *Diablo II* as a 3D artist, before expanding its lore. He's now CEO of MoonBeast.



DAVID BREVIK

» David was behind the original *Diablo* and was lead on *Diablo II*. He now runs Greybeard Games.

could do whatever we wanted because we were passionate about games and we understood how to make PC games. We thought that we could have at least a breakeven scenario." David had

founded his studio Condor with Max and Erich Schaefer, but the name Condor – as it was originally called – didn't last very long, with Blizzard buying out the studio a few months prior to the original *Diablo*'s release. But even under the name of Blizzard North, David and the team behind *Diablo* was not beholden to its sugar daddy in Irvine, California. "The guys down south said, 'Do whatever you want to do and we'll look at whatever ideas you have.'" David adds that Blizzard was hopeful for a sequel, but that they were "really flexible" about what the *Diablo* team would move onto next.

"THE FACT IS THAT WE THOUGHT THAT WE WERE INVINCIBLE, WE THOUGHT WE COULD DO WHATEVER WE WANTED"

DAVID BREVIK

game, which used a peer-to-peer connection and enabled players with the know-how to cheat by duplicating gold, items and even tweaking values in the game. Naturally it was a massive problem

for a game whose multiplayer was as popular as *Diablo*'s, and it was one of the core aspects of the sequel's development that had called to the team even before development began. "We wanted to make a bigger game," adds David, "that had outdoor levels and indoor levels and things like that and that was going to take more resources. Everybody was OK with that, everybody thought that these were the right decisions, not only for the game, but for the company in general." What this meant was that the original *Diablo* team, which had been in the low 20s, tripled in size to handle the sequel's scope, bump in quality and overall content needs.

"They were pretty early in *Diablo II* development when I joined," says Phil Shenk, one of the newcomers that were hired as a result of the expanded scope of the sequel. "They had a character walking around in a dungeon but there wasn't much to see, so I was in there pretty early." Phil joined as a 3D artist having worked at a small offshoot studio of Maxis, which was itself working on a game called *Crucible* that had influences of *Diablo* after its release in 1997 ate into the productivity of the team. "There were some other folks that joined around the same time and we all came to Blizzard North knowing what *Diablo* was and loving the game and kind of on the vanguard of the new generation that came specifically because they loved *Diablo* and had played it, whereas the rest of the team that was there from Condor that had worked on other games kind of fell into games." Because Phil had at



» [PC] The various darkened temples, cathedrals and forgotten corners manage to retain that same dread of the first game, but with faster-paced combat.



» [PC] Few things are as satisfying as teleporting out of a dungeon to claim a moment's respite from the darkness. And besides, you've likely a bag full of loot to sell.

This was important because for a few months after the release of *Diablo*, there was not much enthusiasm to get to work on a sequel. It was a lot of effort

for David and the team to get *Diablo* out and while its success was gratifying, the truth is that there was a very real feeling of burnout about the game. This didn't last too long, however: as more and more players got their hands on the game and a few months cooling off had given David the time to summon up some motivation (and key goals) for the sequel, it became all too clear to the team that Blizzard North's next project was going to be *Diablo II*.

"We got more resources and time to make a bigger game," explains David. "When we sat down and we talked about what we were gonna do, we knew that we wanted to make it client-server [based] and that would take more resources." This was to solve the cheating that had been rife with the original

A CLASS ACT

DIABLO II'S UNIQUE CLASSES, AND JUST HOW POPULAR THEY WERE WITH GAMERS

AMAZON

■ This one stands out for not being a classic RPG class, and its use of javelins to deal damage from afar is pretty iconic. Amazons are fast fighters and have skills intended for evasion, but for the most part aren't as flashy as many of the other classes available and quite frequently got unfairly overlooked.

ASSASSIN

■ Brought into the game with the *Lord Of Destruction* expansion, the Assassin has a mixed rep among veteran *Diablo* players. Some might call it the worst class in the game, but the popular Trapsin (the name for its trap-based character build) is known to be able to handle some of the hardest fights in the game with little need for powerful gear.

BARBARIAN

■ The strongman of the game and the sequel's equivalent to the standard Warrior class. That means plenty of up-close melee combat, stat-boosting buffs and the iconic Leap ability. The Barbarian is a fairly maligned class, though, lacking popularity due to his slow movement and dependency on gear.

DRUID

■ Also added in *Lord Of Destruction*, this nature lover requires a closer attention to your build than any other class since each of its three skill trees offer very unique ways of playing: either by controlling the elements, shapeshifting into a were-creature or summoning a veritable army of critters to do your bloody work for you.

► least some experience within a games environment, he fell organically into a lead role as he mentored others on techniques and pipelines to help improve production – things that even some of those working on *Diablo* hadn't been aware of.

The game itself was in development for more than three years and while there had been an expansion to the original in the meantime, this was certainly against the grain for the industry where it was common for a sequel to be churned out in just a year or so to capitalise on the popularity of the original game. Blizzard North was content taking its time to ensure the game was a solid release, and that it could live up to the

hype. "The biggest thing that we were all excited about at the beginning was the outside environments," recalls Phil, "and everything feeling bigger and wider and that breath of being, 'Oh I'm out of a dungeon.' *Diablo* was very claustrophobic, everything was slow, you couldn't run, you had tight corridors, the lighting was super dark, you couldn't see around corners so there was that really tense edge of your seat second-by-second nail-biting tension."

"WE ALL CAME TO BLIZZARD NORTH KNOWING WHAT DIABLO WAS AND LOVING THE GAME AND KIND OF ON THE VANGUARD OF THE NEW GENERATION"
PHIL SHENK

number-based action combat that saw swathes of demons and monsters shattered apart in seconds was perhaps the most defining sensation of both the series as a whole and any *Diablo* clone that followed. "In hindsight it feels like it was all fine, we got to where we got, why

were we ever worried about it?" says Phil. "But in the middle of it, yeah, there were times that we felt like we were messing with the formula or that we were ruining it."

Since this was the second rodeo for the denizens of hell, Blizzard North had a chance to expand on a lot of dark, gothic world and lore that had been a key selling point of the original game. While the setting of *Diablo* was certainly unique and it did captivate, the sequel had players tromping through jungles and deserts and all sorts of wondrous locales with even more wondrous characters to meet. There needed to be more thought put into precisely where the story was going. "I sort of gradually started helping out with quests," says Phil, who in addition to lead art became one of the defining contributors to *Diablo*'s world. "A lot of it was Matt Householder [producer at Blizzard] and I. He was managing the writing for all of that – we had some outsourced writers – and he was setting up the scripting and he would come to me and say, 'Hey, could you take a look at this?' And sometimes I would just rewrite the stuff, and sometimes I would edit it, or come up with new ideas." Phil recalls a very particular questline that

D *iablo II*, conversely, would push the feeling of power and heroism, making it far more possible for the player to rush into a horde of enemies and clash with them in a blaze of steel, fire and body parts. It felt like a drastic shift from what *Diablo* had been, and the doubt surrounding such big changes to the foundation of what worked was one of the "big challenges" that Blizzard North faced while working on the sequel. "Dave often came in on a Monday and would just be like, 'This isn't at all what we should be doing, we need to rip it all up and start over,'" says Phil. "Not literally, but it would be that kind of sweeping mandate and usually it was just a small change. I do remember that a couple of times there'd be a big meeting where some folks would try to figure out what to do."

Arguably *Diablo II* even more so than its predecessor went on to become the benchmark for the hack 'n' slash action RPG genre, and that feeling of fast-paced,



» [PC] Though the community of players locked onto their favourite classes through various build options, each class in the game was more than capable of finishing solo if played well.



NECROMANCER

■ This one's a popular class, offering a twist on the typical spellcaster classes by allowing the player to summon the undead to fight for them. That doesn't mean the Necromancer can't dole out the damage himself, though, with various poisons and curses to hand to take down his enemies.



PALADIN

■ The tanky Paladin is a popular class thanks to its Hammerdin build, which relies on the Blessed Hammer skill capable of upwards of 15,000 points of damage. Even outside of this specialist build, the Paladin is an interesting and flexible class that doesn't really have any alternative in *Diablo*.



SORCERESS

■ As a powerful spellcaster, the Sorceress has all the flashy spells you might expect to see from this class. But it's not the most popular class solely for its damage-dealing capabilities, but also for its speed. Thanks to the Teleport ability, the Sorceress is the fastest class in the game and can make grinding for powerful items considerably faster.



» [PC] Interestingly, *Diablo*'s three unique skill trees for each class was a concept that went on to define elements of *World Of Warcraft*'s character classes and skill trees.



» [PC] It'll happen on more than one occasion that you're swarmed by so many beasts and demons that you might not even find your own character in the middle of them.



» [PC] "You have died," the mantra for *Diablo* a long, long time before *Dark Souls* popularised the concept of punishing difficulty.



» [PC] Each of the five Acts (including *Lord Of Destruction*) came with their own central town location, each more despairing than the last.

MASTERING DIABLO II

NEVER DO ANOTHER
CORPSE RUN AGAIN

FOCUS YOUR TARGET

■ It's tempting to rush into a battle in *Diablo II* sword a-flailing, but it will often happen that the real threat is on the perimeter of the pack, preparing to ambush you or casting nasty spells from afar. Pay attention to everything you're fighting, not just the fodder upfront.



WALK NOT RUN

■ We get it, you need to get around quick. But if you're hit while you're running, you have no defence and your block chance is reduced by two-thirds. Get into the habit early on of toggling running off as you enter into battle to avoid turning yourself into mincemeat.



HIRE A MERCENARY

■ *Diablo II* is not an easy game especially when you start notching things up to Nightmare difficulty, so having a helping hand is always going to be handy. Mercenaries will help you to balance out the weaknesses of your character class, and act as a sponge for damage in a pinch.



LEVEL UP RIGHT

■ It might not be an exciting combat-based tip, but it's still crucial: don't spread your skill points too thin. It's way better to pick an ability you like using (perhaps it fits your play style or intended build) and dump all your skill points in there, rather than trying to do less with all skills.



MAX YOUR VITALITY

■ If you're new to *Diablo II* then you might be tempted to approach stats with a degree of logic and balance. Don't. Raise only what you need to equip the items you want, but otherwise stick everything into Vitality. With this you'll increase your health pool and therefore your longevity in battle.



» [PC] There aren't very many bosses in the game, outside of the randomly generated rare mobs, which makes the intense fights against them all the more thrilling.



» [PC] There's something incredibly satisfying about returning to earlier levels and obliterating once tough enemies.





» [PC] There are a ton of interesting and varied locales in the sequel, which is likely a big part of its greater success. This is part of the harem that's found in the desert of Act II.



» [PC] The *Lord Of Destruction* expansion pack brought the sequel's planned storyline to an end and had players taking on Baal himself.

triggered his route into this aspect of the game's development, referencing the sultan of Persian-styled Lut Gholein and his evasiveness surrounding his hidden harem beneath the palace. "I was friends with [environment artist] Dave Glenn and so I went to him and I was like, 'Let's make it so the demons have been coming up from the basement this whole time and the sultan thinks he's keeping his harem safe down there, but they're really all getting butchered. So let's make that look like this exotic Persian harem, but there's blood everywhere. It's gonna be super grim.'"

From there Phil slowly began to transition into taking a more hands-on approach with questing, world building and all that, ultimately putting the foundation together for the core documentation that would go on to define so much of the franchise's lore. "I was helping Matt already with licensed IP stuff," says Phil, "and Blizzard 'South' wanted to do books and comics. And he was like, 'Is there a world bible or anything like that that explains anything?' There were various documents that were just spread out, some from *Diablo*, some from *Diablo II*. Story that either Steig Hedlund [game designer at Blizzard] or Chris Metsen [game designer and writer at Blizzard] had come up with." There wasn't much that solidified the narrative of the game, and what was there was often rather "hand-wavey", with Phil adding that there wasn't even a world map. "We knew we were going from Tristram to Lut Gholein to Act III, but how do you fit in the jungle? Does that make any sense? So I started working on this world bible and it turned into a bigger project, it turned into the writer's guide. I put most of that together and other people would help flesh bits of it out." Steig in particular was critical in building out the depth of *Diablo*'s world thanks to his, as Phil puts it "crazy mind for history and fantasy history" and

"DAVE OFTEN CAME IN ON A MONDAY AND WOULD JUST BE LIKE: 'WE NEED TO RIP IT ALL UP AND START OVER'"

PHIL SHENK

his dedication for "the accuracy of history" was a reason for *Diablo II*'s rich world.

All this continued to add depth and breadth to the world that players would wander around in, while

the five new classes meant that there was still something new to learn for fans of the original. These characters themselves were designed to be fresh but recognisable enough that it would be clear about how they would play, a facet of design that Matt Householder would once term "familiar novelty". As a result of all this new content and expanded world, even the increased team and budget wasn't going to cut it. "It was pretty late, we'd missed some deadlines, it was pretty clear that we weren't going to be able to do five acts like we thought we were gonna do," says Phil, "and so we made the decision to just do four acts and just go right to Hell, and then we'll do an expansion pack." Phil then split off from the sequel alongside a few others within a strike team, working to produce the expansion pack that would release that final fifth act of *Diablo II*.

Diablo II would go on to release in June 2000 more than three years after the original, while the expansion pack would release a year later. It went on to win numerous GOTY awards, over 15 million in sales and is regularly named as one of the top games in the cyclical Best Games Of All Time articles that like to regularly rile up people on social media. It was a game of its time, it defined an entire subgenre of RPG and contributed to Blizzard's stratospheric levels of fame and adoration. "We had times of worry but in terms of the public's expectations for it, I don't feel like there was even any scepticism about it," says Phil, "We all played it, especially towards the end, so that was a good sign and I feel like the confidence of shipping was high, but it was still a little nail-biting." Thinking back on his work on *Diablo II*, Phil adds, "I think it's what I'm most proud of, certainly it shaped me the most for the rest of my career." ✨

RESURRECTING DIABLO II

ONCE MORE UNTO THE DEPTHS, DEAR FRIENDS

■ One of the things about going back in time with videogames is that there can be a concern that things won't be quite as 'all-time classic' as you once remembered. It was the same worry with *Diablo II: Resurrected*, which as far as remasters go, didn't aim to do too much. It added modern visuals that could be toggled with the retro original, but the core game and its balancing was all (rightfully) left untouched. A handful of neat quality-of-life changes did make their way in, however, such as a Shared Stash between each of your characters or the merciful option to toggle automatic gold collection. Players could even load in their old *Diablo II* save and continue exactly where they left off two decades earlier.

What was especially interesting was how Blizzard treated the release of this remaster after it was made available. A number of patches were released after launch, some for stability or bug fixes but others for important features and changes. Ladder Play, the competitive mode from *Diablo II*, was reinstated after its initial omission, a tweaked UI drastically altered how casting worked and there was even a game balance patch that broke away from the intended design philosophy of retaining an authentic *Diablo II* experience to enable some otherwise underutilised play styles.



ESSENTIAL GAME

TIMESPLITTERS 2

It should come as no surprise that this first-person shooter is one of the best loved PS2 four-player games, given that its developer Free Radical was staffed by plenty of the same people who made *GoldenEye 007* so enjoyable on the N64. The original *TimeSplitters* was one of the highlights of the console's launch line-up, and this sequel built on that success to become a vital part of any multiplayer session. And hey – as its appearance in *Shaun Of The Dead* showed, it's a game that even zombies can enjoy.



Multitap fact

■ Slim model PS2 consoles with model numbers SCPH-70000 and later require the SCPH-70120 Multitap, rather than the original SCPH-10090 model that's pictured here.

Multitap

» PLATFORM: PlayStation 2 » YEAR: 2000

» COST: £29.99 (launch), £17+ (today, boxed), £5+ (today, unboxed)

When Nintendo put four control ports on the N64, the world took notice. The undeniable multiplayer appeal of games like *Mario Kart 64* and *GoldenEye 007* ensured that when the next generation of consoles arrived, four control ports would be standard – or at least they would have been, had Sony played along. For reasons unfathomable, the market leader decided that access to such sociable antics would remain locked behind an accessory. The PS2 Multitap's horizontal lines are designed to resemble the console and, just like its PlayStation predecessor, the device allows four controllers and memory cards to be connected via a single port.

The Multitap received plenty of support over the years, with sports games being far and away the most common source of four-player action. Further support could be found in first-person shooters including *Quake III Revolution* and the *Medal Of Honor* series, racing games such as *Burnout Dominator*, *Shox* and the *ATV Offroad Fury* series, as well as the *Def Jam* and *WWE* games. If you're planning a PS2 party night, it's an essential bit of kit. ★



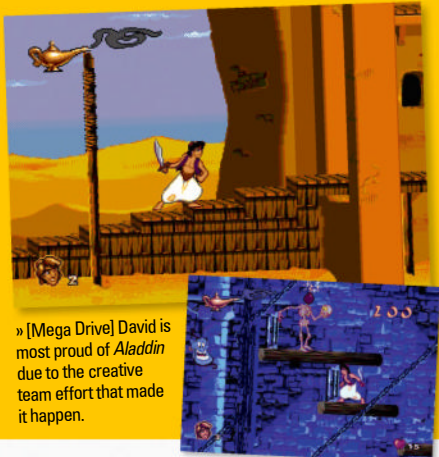


DAVID BISHOP

A trip into London in the early Eighties and a chance remark in a shop began David Bishop's prolific career in designing, producing and marketing some very well-known and hugely successful videogames

Words by Richard Hewison

David Bishop has worked on numerous gaming classics covering a wide range of formats and genres over the past four decades. People will have experienced some of his titles or recognised his name without necessarily realising why, but David was there from the early days, and he continues to bring his expertise to gaming some 40 years later. Somewhat surprisingly (as you'll learn), it was his love of playing chess that gave him that first opportunity, and where it took him is a fascinating story. Exploding puzzlers, spooky houses, spice mining and Disney classics are all part of David's portfolio, as we are about to discover...



» [Mega Drive] David is most proud of *Aladdin* due to the creative team effort that made it happen.

When did you first get into computer games? How did that happen?

I was a student at Aston University, and I spent a lot of time playing bridge, and I carried on playing after I left uni with three friends of mine. One time, I said that we should all meet up in London in this games store in Oxford Street called The Games Centre. I turned up early and they were all running late, so I went around the store, and they had a whole row of chess computers lined up, so I started playing, making a move, and then going to the next computer because they were quite slow to respond back then. I had a nice chat with the guy who worked there and said, 'It must be fun to work in a place like this,' but thought nothing more of it.

Did your friends turn up?

My friends still hadn't arrived, but the guy who owned the shop came walking through to the backdoor, which led to some stairs up to his office, and the shop assistant yelled to him, 'This guy wants a job!' which I hadn't said at all, but before I knew it I was whisked upstairs by the owner called Graham Levine and interviewed for a job I hadn't applied for. I'd been interviewing since leaving uni, trying to get a job in marketing with my business degree. I was always shortlisted but never actually got a job, but I got this one and started the following Monday.

What happened next?

Three months later, I was promoted to be the electronic games buyer, purchasing the chess computers, bridge computers and all the new little battery-operated handheld games that were coming out, like *Astro Blast*, *Game & Watch* and whatever, and I got to know Robert Stein quite well, as he represented the SciSys brand of chess computers that we sold. One

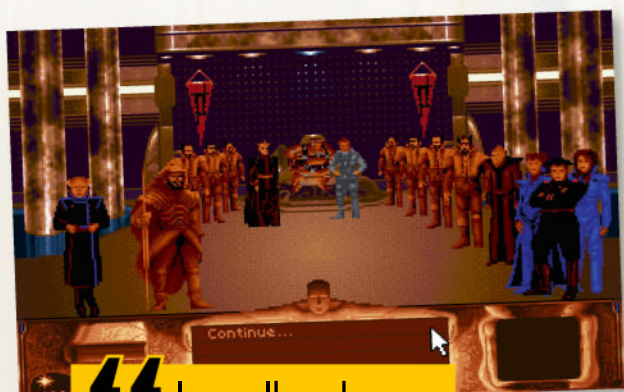
day, he came in and mentioned he was going to start up a games development company in Hungary. He said, 'I know Jack Tramiel who owns Commodore and he's promised to give us 36 of the brand-new Commodore 64s off the production line,' and Robert had a plan to put to work all these unemployed maths professors and rocket scientists, who really were rocket scientists, in Hungary to write games and he needed someone to work with them on the games and then bring the finished products back to England to sell here. That was in 1981.

That must have been an interesting proposition. What did you do?

Well, I left my job at The Games Centre and began spending two out of every four weeks working in Hungary with these super over-qualified people who couldn't get work. We put an advert on TV in Hungary inviting people to send in their ideas for games, and we got about 600 ideas and I had to go through them all and shortlist 12 that we could start working on, which we did. I then began bringing the cassettes back with me and I'd go around to companies that were literally just starting like Ocean Software, Thorn EMI, Quicksilver, Mirrorsoft and Virgin Games, and that's how I got into games software.

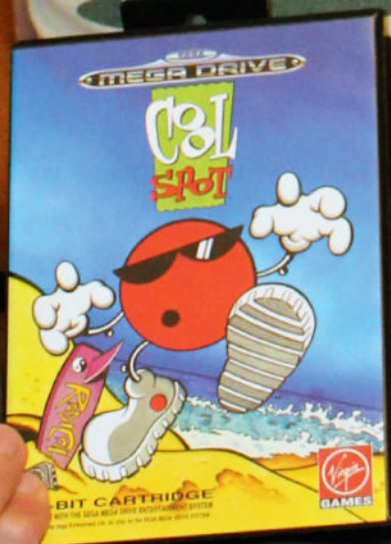
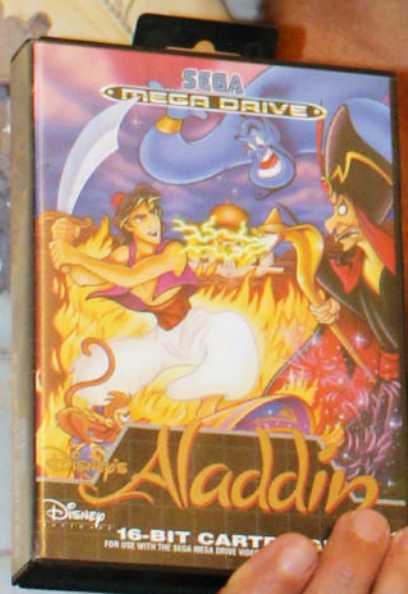
So that was presumably Andromeda Software. Was there a UK office?

Yes, that was Andromeda Software, and we did have a small office in the UK near North London, and that was my base in the weeks when I was in England, but all of the games development in those early days was being done out in Hungary – which was still a communist country back then. Several times, I was searched while leaving Hungary



“ I walked through the door into his office, and Frank threw a thick softback copy of Frank Herbert’s novel Dune at me ”

David Bishop



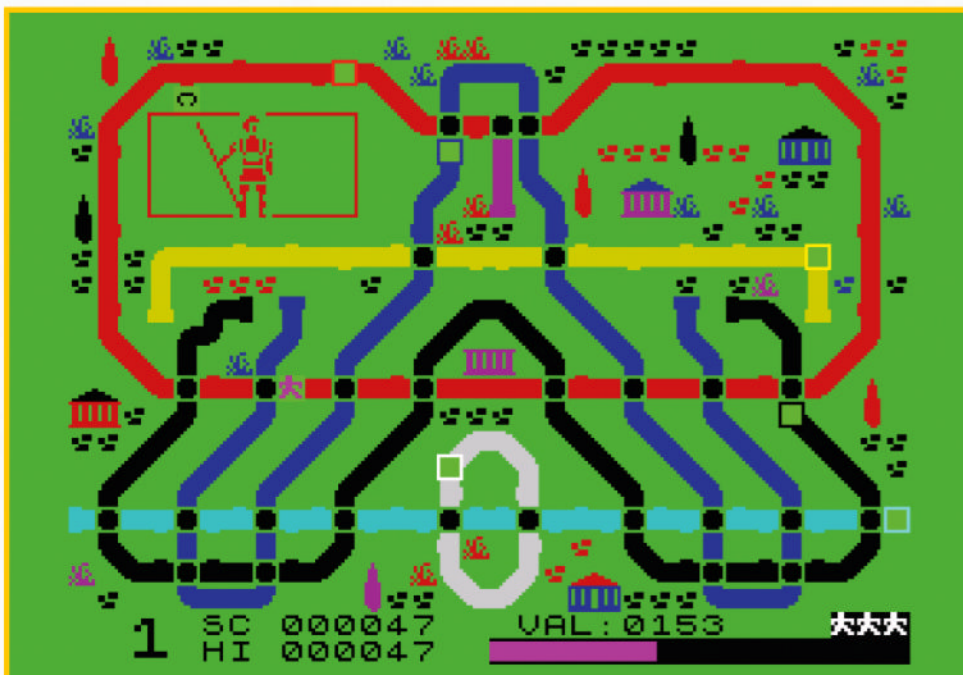


SELECTED TIMELINE

- CAESAR THE CAT [1983] ZX SPECTRUM
- EUREKA! [1984] ZX SPECTRUM
- SCARABAEUS/INVADERS OF THE LOST TOMB [1985] COMMODORE 64
- THINK! [1985] VARIOUS
- ZIG ZAG [1987] COMMODORE 64
- BOMBUZAL [1988] VARIOUS
- PHOBIA [1989] COMMODORE 64
- WONDERLAND [1990] VARIOUS
- DUNE [1992] VARIOUS
- COOL SPOT [1993] VARIOUS
- MICK & MACK AS THE GLOBAL GLADIATORS [1993] VARIOUS
- ROBOCOPY VS TERMINATOR [1993] VARIOUS
- DISNEY'S ALADDIN [1993] VARIOUS
- DISNEY'S THE JUNGLE BOOK [1993] VARIOUS
- DISNEY'S THE LION KING [1994] VARIOUS
- THE 7TH GUEST [1994] VARIOUS
- TOONSTRUCK [1996] VARIOUS
- CIRCUIT BREAKERS [1998] PLAYSTATION
- CREATURES ADVENTURES [1999] PC
- RAT ATTACK! [2000] VARIOUS



» [C64] Ocean Software published Andromeda's *Chinese Juggler* in 1984, crediting the game to Creative Software.



» [ZX Spectrum] *Eureka!* wasn't available for the Acorn Archimedes, but it was on the ZX Spectrum and Commodore 64.



» [C64] *Caesar The Cat* was David Bishop and Andromeda Software's first published game in 1983.

► and on one occasion, they found these Commodore 64 cassettes. They put one in a cassette recorder and pressed play only to hear all these beeps and buzzing sounds as the data played. Their first thought was that I was some kind of spy trying to smuggle secrets out of the country! It took ages to explain to people, who couldn't speak any English, what was on the tapes. Scary at the time but funny afterwards. It didn't help that I had a beard and looked a bit dodgy at that time!

And do you remember what the first game was that you sold?

The first result of those endeavours was a game called *Caesar The Cat*, which came out 40 years ago now, and that was sold to Mirrorsoft who

had only recently started, like so many of the games publishers back then.

Andromeda established a strong working relationship with Mirrorsoft, and quite a few of its titles were published through the publisher over the next few years.

Yes, and even after I left Andromeda, I continued my connection with Mirrorsoft. I worked for a while with Tony Crowther, and most of the games we worked on together were published by Mirrorsoft.

Which other publishers did Andromeda sell games to?

We sold *Chinese Juggler* to Ocean Software. Activision commissioned us to do the *Tour De France* game. We also did *Scarabaeus* for Ariolasoft.

***Scarabaeus* was an amazing game on the Commodore 64!**

Yes, *Scarabaeus* was awesome, wasn't it? It was pretty cutting edge for when it came out. That heartbeat sound...

Absolutely. We think it still holds up remarkably well today. So, eventually, Andromeda began designing its own games, beyond those ideas originally submitted by the Hungarian public?

Yes, we came up with our own ideas and we would work with others to program them.

You're also associated with Tigress Marketing. Was that after Andromeda?

I was doing a number of things by then. I was working as a freelance journalist for *Computer & Video Games* magazine which I did on and off for about eight or nine years, but I also realised that there was a market for doing PR and freelance game design. I knew someone at Disney called Beth Wooding, and I met Chris Palmer when he interviewed me for a BBC

“The 7th Guest was developed by a group of very clever people who had been at Virgin but formed their own company called Trilobyte”

David Bishop

programme he was presenting. We all decided that we had complementary skills, so we set up Tigress Marketing because in my experience, the more traditional PR companies who worked for games publishers didn't have a clue. Beth's background was in marketing and although I'd wanted to be in marketing, I'd failed to get a job, but we all understood and had a real passion for games, so we started up as a PR company.

But you were designing games as well, like *Golf Construction Set*, *Deactivators*, *Think!* and *They Stole A Million*, in addition to doing PR work, correct?

Yes. After a while, we began Tigress Designs, selling designs to publishers, and we did that for maybe three or four years. *Think!*, for example, was a really good logic game.

On the subject of game designs, did the games evolve from one particular idea that sparked others? How did that process work?

I love puzzle games, and I've always liked the concept of chain reactions. I had this idea for a game that had levels with bombs in it, where you had to blow up the bombs without

blowing yourself up, and that's where the idea for *Bombuzal* came from. It grew from that one idea, and we came up with all these other components with which we built all the levels. It began with a really simple idea that you only had three sizes of bomb, but you could only detonate the smallest one, and so you had enough time to get away from the

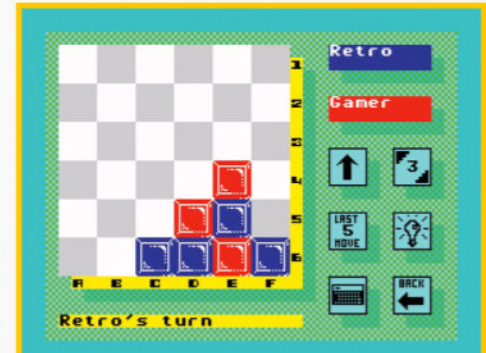
blast radius before it triggered the other bombs with the bigger blast radius. We then added the grooves so you could slide the bombs into different positions... things like that. Before we knew it, Tony Crowther and I had this big level editor, and to get good reviews, we sent a floppy disk with the editor to each of the games journalists and invited them to design a level. They were then unlikely to pan a game that had a level they designed in it!

That's your marketing side coming into play!

Absolutely. We got various other people to design levels, including Jeff Minter. It was a really fun thing to do, and we effectively got free content, which obviously helped! Another example for where a game design came from was when I was working on *Deactivators*. That came from the question, 'What if gravity didn't come from the ground?' and the thing you had to do was get rid of a ticking bomb and get it out of the house. I also really liked the side-on cut-out dolls house view we used in that one.

There's definitely a bit of a bomb theme going on for some of those designs.

Yes. I designed all the levels for *Deactivators* on paper first, and the ideas became more complex



» [ZX Spectrum] A two-player game in full swing for the strategy game *Think!*

as they went along. Lots of designs come from a single thought or idea like that. I also did *Phobia* with John Cook at Mirrorsoft and Tony Crowther and that's another example where the original idea came from wanting to do a game based around things that people feared.

After you did a handful of games with Tony Crowther, you ended up working at Virgin Games. How did that come about?

I remember thinking it was about time I got a full-time job, and I planned to go on the last day of one of the big computer shows in London to meet a whole bunch of people. The only problem was I had a really bad toothache, and I really should have gone to the dentist, but I had no choice as this was my last chance to go. So, I bought a tiny shot bottle of whiskey on my way, and I also got some dissolvable painkillers, and I ended up having these very adult conversations with people, stinking of alcohol, and suffering from this terrible toothache. None of the conversations amounted to much, but I literally bumped into Nick Alexander from Virgin Games in a corridor at the show, and he said, 'I hear you're looking for a job.' To

DAVID'S PICKS Five classic games from David's rich back catalogue



BOMBUZAL

■ A classic puzzle game coded by Ross Goodley and Tony Crowther for 8-bit and 16-bit platforms. It was co-designed by David Bishop and Tony, with levels designed by games journalists and programmers, including Jeff Minter, Andrew Braybrook, Geoff Crammond, Gary Penn and Gary Liddon.



WONDERLAND

■ David enjoyed text adventures and had been thinking of designing a game based on *Alice In Wonderland*. He proposed the idea to Anita Sinclair at Magnetic Scrolls, and she asked him to pitch the design which became *Wonderland*, using its new Magnetic Windows system.



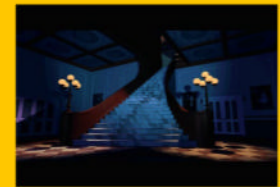
DUNE

■ A brilliantly atmospheric and challenging graphic adventure with strategic elements crafted by David and the Cryo team in France, based on Frank Herbert's novel. The soundtrack by Phillippe Ulrich and Stephane Picq for the PC version was also released as an album.



DISNEY'S ALADDIN

■ David and Virgin Games' collaboration with Disney was a fruitful experience, producing three excellent console and home-computer games. *Aladdin* was a groundbreaking collaboration between the filmmakers and the game developers, producing an amazingly authentic adaptation.



THE 7TH GUEST

■ David's role as creative consultant to Trilobyte contributed to the landmark spookfest that was *The 7th Guest*. Featuring rendered VGA graphics and FMV actors playing out the events within a dark, ominous mansion. The puzzles were fiendish, and the game oozed with atmosphere.



AN IMPRESSIVE CV

A snapshot of David's stellar career

■ David's range of roles within the games industry is impressive, covering designing, producing, or marketing games for dozens of publishers. UK developer and publisher Domark used Andromeda to write a game based on a design by Ian Livingstone. David's marketing expertise helped launch Domark's publishing label with the result of the partnership being an adventure game with a £25,000 cash prize called *Eureka!*, which debuted in 1984. David followed that up with design duties on the Domark game that marked Roger Moore's last assignment as James Bond, the 1985 action title based on *A View To A Kill*.

When David was at Virgin Games in the early Nineties, apart from working on *Dune* and the Disney console titles, he also had special advisor responsibilities for Westwood Studios on the first *Fable & Fiends* point-and-click graphic adventure, *The Legend Of Kyrandia: Book One*. He was producer for the fun arcade title *Rolling Ronny*; and was in charge of design for the popular console action blaster *RoboCop Vs The Terminator*.

The often-overlooked *Team Apache* helicopter simulator from Simis was produced by David for Mindscape in 1998, when he was director of development. Meanwhile, he managed the PlayStation game *Circuit Breakers*, which he then followed up with additional design and co-producer duties on the simple-yet-fun PlayStation arcade game *Rat Attack!*, also for Mindscape.

Into the new millennium, David oversaw the design and production of multiple entries in the *Creatures* game series, including *Creatures 2*, *Creatures 3*, *Creatures Adventures*, and *Creatures Village*. In more recent times, David worked on a number of high-profile mobile games for Android and iOS devices, including *Plants Vs Zombies* and *Bejeweled: Classic* for PopCap, and the *Moshi* series of games for Mind Candy. He served as a jury member for three interactive BAFTA award ceremonies, and cofounded Delinquent Interactive in 2014, which became part of MAG Interactive the following year, where he still works to this day as he smashes through into his fifth remarkable decade of working in the games industry.



» [PC] David was special advisor on Westwood's point-and-click release *The Legend Of Kyrandia: Book One*.

► this day I'm still not sure how he knew of me but we had a really nice chat, and that's how I ended up working there.

A classic case of being in the right place at the right time! What was working at Virgin Games like?

On my very first day, I was told to go to Frank Hermann's office, as he was going to be my boss. He was a wonderful man, but I found him quite intimidating. I walked through the door into his office and Frank threw a thick softback copy of Frank Herbert's novel *Dune* at me, which I just managed to catch before it hit me between the eyes, and he said, 'Go make a game based on this,' and he then went back to doing whatever it was he was doing before I walked in. That was my introduction to Frank. I guess I was lucky it wasn't a hardback edition because *Dune* is a very dense book!

No pressure, then!

[Laughs]. Not much, no. *Dune* was the first game I worked on at Virgin, and I worked with a guy called Philippe Ulrich in France. It had an amazing soundtrack, which we even released as an album on CD. However, about halfway through development, Frank and Martin Alper commissioned a second *Dune* game from a North American developer in Las Vegas called Westwood Studios, as they didn't necessarily have complete confidence in what I was doing. Obviously, the first game turned out fine and did very well, and of course, the rest is history in regard to *Dune II* as it became the precursor to *Command & Conquer* and that whole genre. I spent the next few years at Virgin in the UK working with a number of different people on various projects, including a very young Ubisoft, and then Virgin decided to open an office in the United States and Martin Alper asked me if I'd go and help set it up, so I moved my whole family over there in 1992. One of the reasons for the move was because they wanted to start working with Disney on a range of games, and to also license a number of other Hollywood titles.



» [C64] David pedalled his wares to Activision for *Tour De France* in 1986.

“We worked on *RoboCop Vs Terminator*, *Cool Spot* and *Jungle Book*, and then we did *Aladdin*, working with Disney and the likes of Jeffrey Katzenberg”

David Bishop

Setting up a US office must have been a huge challenge...

My job was to go out there, start hiring other games designers and cherry-pick the best-of-breed people I knew in the UK to go over and build a super-team, the Man City of game development, if you like, which I did, convincing people like David Perry, Mark Kelly, Nick Bruty, and a bunch of other people to join us. We worked on *RoboCop Vs Terminator*, *Cool Spot* and *Jungle Book*, and then we did *Aladdin*, working with Disney and the likes of Jeffrey Katzenberg.

You're name-dropping now!

I know! But they insisted that we pitch the game design to him in his office, and they put the whole weight of Disney behind the game launch. We got to work with the directors, and the animators who worked on *Aladdin* got to work on the game. We devised a different way of putting animation into that game as a result. It was hand-drawn animation that we scanned, and it was then electronically inked by the same people who were creating *Ren & Stimpy*. Before that, game animation frames were done manually in Deluxe Paint. That's why the animation was so authentic in that game. And we had to get the game out to coincide with the video release, which meant we had about five months to get it designed, built and approved by Sega Of Europe, America and Japan.

Those Disney games really set a marker for that era of consoles.

Yes, I would include *Cool Spot* in there as well. 7up in the States had the red spot as



» [C64] Superb atmosphere, detailed graphics and a challenging maze quest awaited in *Scarabeus*.



» [PC] *Dune* broke new ground with its combination of graphic adventure, strategy and an out-of-this-world soundtrack.

their logo, and it would come to life and be mischievous and then jump back onto the bottle just before humans came back into the room. They used Fido Dido as their character in Europe, but they wanted the red dot character in a game, so they said to us, 'You make us a game, and we'll give you 20 million dollars' worth of advertising on cans and bottles to promote it,' so we did, and they did.

Obviously, those titles were all really successful. What other games from the Nineties were you involved with whilst in the United States?

The 7th Guest was developed by a group of very clever people who had been at Virgin but formed their own company called Trilobyte. Rob Landeros and Graeme Devine created this CD-ROM game that was cutting edge because it was one of the first CD-ROM games to come out. That and *Myst* were the first two big titles

for that format. Developing *The 7th Guest* was a huge challenge because back then there wasn't masses of storage and memory for the two CD-ROMs' worth of data they were generating. That whole process of managing all those assets was a nightmare.

***The 7th Guest* has recently been reimagined as a modern virtual reality game. Have you seen it? It's a really wonderfully spooky experience.**

I had heard about the VR version, but I haven't been involved at all. I'm curious to see how it holds up after all this time. It was a fun project to work on back in the day. Another similar game I worked on whilst I was at Virgin in the States was *Toonstruck*, which was interesting, to say the least!

Was *Toonstruck* the game that featured Christopher Lloyd?

Yes.

That definitely proved to be a challenging game. What do you remember about *Toonstruck's* development?

Well, I never want to work on a game of that size ever again! [Laughs]. It was a roller-coaster ride, and it just got way too big and became unmanageable. I had a very simple idea, and it just ran away with itself. I learnt so much from the mistakes I made on that project, but I am still very proud that we got something out.

This seems a good moment, then, to ask you to think back to all those games you worked on throughout the Eighties and

DAVID'S LITTLE FRIEND

David's fondest Computer & Video Games article involved an imaginary friend

■ "I did a preview of *Little Computer People*, the early life sim by the genius David Crane released on the C64 back in 1985. I chose to make it a 'diary of an LCP', so everything was from the little guy's perspective looking out at the world from the other side of the TV screen. I shared it with David Crane who also really liked my treatment. He even sent me a development version where the LCP's dog took a dump every minute or so leaving an ever-increasing number of doggy poos littered all over the house!"



» [C64] David's magazine article of *Little Computer People* inspired its creator to send him a unique version.

Nineties. Which ones would you say you are most proud of?

I'm very proud of *Aladdin* for a number of reasons. The whole process had to be a well-oiled machine, and working with this incredible team, we had to learn how to work together quickly. David Perry had to hold fort in his office and people would check things in and out with him all the time. He would work 17-hour days, and people would sometimes sleep in the office. All the animation work, all the tools, and we designed the whole game in less than a week. Then we had to go through the focus group stuff with Disney, and then, for the first time ever, I think, we got Sega to approve the game in parallel at Sega Europe, America and Japan when it was normally done one after another, with Japan last. They even got people in Japan to come in during Golden Week, which is as big a holiday there as Christmas is, to test what I still feel is a cracking good game. We stayed friends and still talk to each other now, which shows what a great team we were. We even got a phone call from Jeffrey Katzenberg at the end to say, 'Thank you very much for your fantastic work,' which was a very classy thing for him to do. The other game I'm most proud of is *Bombuzal*, which I'd love to do as a mobile game one day.

David Bishop, thank you very much. ★



» [Mega Drive] The first Disney game David worked on was *The Jungle Book* for the Sega Mega Drive.

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SECONDS
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T.MINUS



HP099

Advance Wars: Dual Strike

DOUBLE THE SCREENS, DOUBLE THE FUN



» DS » 2005 » INTELLIGENT SYSTEMS

Although I've never been a big fan of conventional RPGs, I do love ones that contain a nice dose of strategy. As a result,

you'll find series like *Fire Emblem* and *Advance Wars* in my collection, while the likes of *Final Fantasy* and *Dragon Quest* are rather thin on the ground.

While *Fire Emblem* is perhaps my favourite SRPG, the *Advance Wars* series comes a close second. I didn't care too much for the *Battalion Wars* games, but I love all the core titles that received a Western release, with *Dual Strike* being a particular favourite.

Released roughly two years after *Advance Wars 2: Black Hole Rising*, *Dual Strike* ramps up the ambition for the series in a number of ways. It focusses on two new characters, Jake and his advisor Rachel, introduces several more and goes big on existing Commanding Officers, with nearly 30 returning from the earlier games. A new adversary is introduced and there's a large number of new vehicles to master, including Megatanks, Piperunners and Stealth Fighters, all of which can cause untold havoc on the battlefield if left unchecked.

The biggest change to the series is that two COs can now fight together, allowing you to balance their strengths and weaknesses to make a formidable team. Additionally, while the top screen of the DS is typically used to convey useful information, it also doubles up as a second battlefield. This adds a huge level of strategy to the game and care needs to be taken, because while troops can be sent from the main front to the second front, they can't return, so you really need to think about how you approach these new scenarios.

All the original modes from the earlier games return, but Intelligent Systems has introduced two more, both of which are excellent. Survival has you trying to complete maps with a limited amount of time, money or turns, while Combat plays out as usual, but uses real-time combat instead. Both modes are excellent, and when added to the core campaign, they offer some of the best strategy battles to be found on the system. Needless to say, *Advance Wars: Dual Strike* is a game that's never going to leave my collection. ★

» RETROREVIEWAL



RETRO RATED



» Analogue is bringing the power of the PC Engine back with the Duo this month, but we've got plenty more in store including a quartet of brand-new Evercade cartridges, Chris Scullion's Dreamcast Encyclopedia and Sonic's new Apple Arcade outing



» The Analogue Duo is a fairly small console, and looks very nice on a shelf.

* PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN

Demons Of Asteborg
I love games like *Castlevania* and *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, so this challenging action game from Neofid Studios has been hard to put down.



NICK

Analogue Duo
My original PC Engine CD setup is something I treasure, but I fear the day it stops working. The Duo certainly lets me rest a little easier.

Analogue Duo

THE PC ENGINE, TURBOCHARGED

INFORMATION

- » RELEASED: OUT NOW
- » PRICE: \$249.99
- » PUBLISHER: ANALOGUE
- » DEVELOPER: ANALOGUE
- » BUY IT FROM: [STORE.ANALOGUE.CO](https://store.analogue.co)



Analogue is perhaps one of the most polarising companies operating in the

retro-gaming business at the moment. We've heard many complaints on social media about its hardware prices, availability and shipping issues, but demand always remains strong because the company's consoles have rarely disappointed those who get hold of them. The Analogue Duo is its latest effort, an FPGA-based console compatible with the PC Engine/TurboGrafx-16 library.

The Duo is a sleek, attractive unit designed to resemble the original PC Engine Duo. The



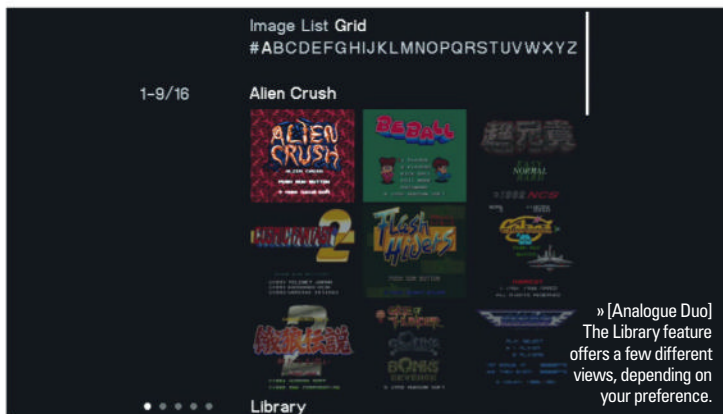
» [Analogue Duo] Like original PC Engine consoles, the Duo doesn't have employ region or copy protection for CD games.

console comes with an HDMI cable, USB-C power cable and US plug adapter – it's capable of 240V 50Hz operation, so a simple adapter is needed for the UK. You should use the supplied power gear, as other options we tried failed to deliver sufficient power. The rear of the console sports an HDMI output delivering video up to 1080p, two USB controller ports and an SD card slot for saving data and firmware upgrades. On the left of the machine, you'll find a single port for an original PC Engine controller and a 3.5mm headphone jack. A new feature for Analogue consoles is support for Bluetooth and 2.4GHz wireless controllers – the 8BitDo PCE Core 2.4g pads we

BRIEF HISTORY

» Analogue has carved out a reputation for high-quality recreations of classic consoles, such as the Super Nt, Mega Sg and Pocket. The Duo is the latest, announced back in 2020 and targeted at recreating the PC Engine line. Like Analogue's previous consoles, the Duo uses FPGA technology rather than software emulation, minimising input lag and enabling accurate behaviour with original peripherals and games.





were sent paired easily and worked well, but no controllers are supplied with the console as standard.

The Duo supports all official HuCard games, regardless of region. The slot is wide enough to support thicker cards like *Street Fighter II*, and the few SuperGrafx games are also supported. All official CD games are also supported without the need for any System Cards (though you can use one if you like), and each game gets its own save memory bank. We didn't experience any incompatibility issues with the games we tested, and each was detected correctly by the console – allowing them to show up in the neat Library section, which tracks which games you've played and how long you've played them. Our Turbo Everdrive V2 booted but repeatedly threw up errors, despite working fine on our original Japanese PC Engine.

In terms of options, the Duo doesn't offer the fine tuning of previous Analogue consoles but what options exist are very useful. The default settings are great, but if you want you can toggle overscan, composite or RGB colour schemes, numerous integer scaling factors and more. The various original display modes simulate a CRT TV set, PC Engine GT and



» [Analogue Duo] The CRT Trinitron display mode looks very good in action, if slightly dark.

PC Engine LT – the handheld ones are mostly novelties, but the CRT mode delivers great results. The ability to adjust CD audio volume is very welcome too. It's also possible to save gameplay screenshots to the SD card, which is a nice extra touch.

Unfortunately, considering Analogue's track record, we have more gripes than usual. This is the company's first console to include CD-ROM support, and the drive itself isn't ideal – the slot-loading mechanism doesn't grab the disc until it's practically all the way in, and doesn't eject it as far as we'd like. We also encountered one instance of the system randomly fail to read a disc, getting stuck on a black screen during a game of *Pomping World*. The system menu was still operational, but there was no indication of an error. It seems to be a rare problem, but not one unique to us – we saw a similar situation when *My Life In Gaming* streamed *Shubibinman 3* on the Duo.

AnalogueOS is the other source of most of our complaints. The user interface has been carried across from the Pocket and it shows, with needlessly large text in the main menus. As of firmware 1.1b, save states aren't implemented and it's not possible to remap your controllers. This means that while



» [Analogue Duo] The slot for HuCard games has a tighter grip than we expected it to.



» [Analogue Duo] The Duo runs games like *Fatal Fury 2* without needing an Arcade Card.



» [Analogue Duo] We needed to force two-button mode for six-button games to detect our pad properly.

it's possible to connect a six-button controller for games that support them, they may not work as expected – we hooked up a Retro-Bit Bluetooth Mega Drive controller and found buttons mapped to L and R rather than C and Z. Hopefully, firmware updates will resolve these issues soon – some early incompatibility problems have already been addressed during our review process.

Despite these issues, the Duo is already a very attractive proposition. Previous Analogue consoles have recreated common, fairly durable machines like the SNES and Mega Drive. Original PC Engine hardware is not cheap these days, so the Duo is actually competitive on price before you even factor in the ageing disc drives and capacitors you won't

have to deal with. Better yet, it removes all the complexity of the various CD-ROM formats and HuCard region locking and just lets you get on with playing games, with all the benefits of modern video output options and wireless controls. If you only want to dabble, the PC Engine Mini may be a better choice for your needs, but the Analogue Duo comes recommended if you've already got a collection or are serious about building one. ★

In a nutshell

There are a few firmware issues to resolve and we'd have preferred a different CD drive, but the Analogue Duo offers an enjoyable and greatly simplified means of accessing the PC Engine's classic library.

* PICK OF THE MONTH

Evercade Multi Game Cartridges

START YOUR 2024 WITH A BANG

INFORMATION

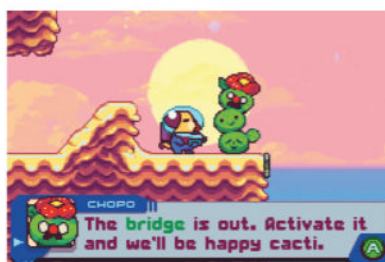
- » **FORMAT:** EVERCADE EXP, EVERCADE VS, EVERCADE
- » **ALSO ON:** NA
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £17.99 EACH
- » **PUBLISHER:** BLAZE ENTERTAINMENT
- » **DEVELOPER:** VARIOUS
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-2



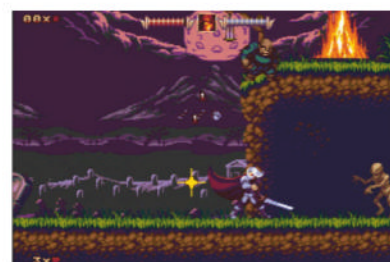
Blaze Entertainment finished 2023 in style, delivering so many carts, we couldn't fit them all in our last issue. We've already reviewed

Full Void and *Home Computer Heroes Collection 1* (70% and 74% respectively) so let's take a look at the other four cartridges Blaze released.

Arguably the two biggest releases of the four are the collections of *Duke Nukem* games. *Duke Nukem Collection 1* is the most interesting as it includes remastered versions of *Duke Nukem 1* and *2*, as well as *Duke Nukem 3D: Total Meltdown*, arguably the Duke's most infamous game. Blaze has done some genuinely excellent work on the first two games, which have been dramatically overhauled to run at 60fps with various visual and other neat enhancements. You can even switch to the original PC versions on the fly to



» [Evercade] We were pleasantly surprised by *Goodboy Galaxy*, it's a great adventure that will last for ages.



» [Evercade] *Demons Of Asteborg* is so good we're considering seeking out the Mega Drive original.

* BRIEF HISTORY

» The original Evercade launched in 2020 and has become a huge success for Blaze Entertainment. Since then, it has released the Evercade VS and Evercade EXP as well as two Super Pocket devices via its Hyper Mega Tech! label, all of which will play these latest releases.

* GO DEEPER

The facts behind Evercade Multi Game Cartridges

» We played all four carts across both the Evercade EXP and Evercade VS and found no notable issues on either.

» The *Duke Nukem Collection 1* is the only current way to officially enjoy the first two *Duke Nukem* games as the PC originals have been delisted.



see the significant changes Blaze has made. *Duke Nukem 3D: Total Meltdown* is less impressive as it's the PlayStation version of the game. It's still enjoyable to play, but it's a pity we didn't get a proper native Evercade port.

Duke Nukem Collection 2 is up next and it once again includes three games. The highlight is easily *Duke Nukem: Time To Kill*, which still plays really well and has an interesting *Tomb Raider* vibe to it. *Land Of The Babes* on the other hand is not only quite clunky to play, but has also aged rather poorly (which is saying something for a *Duke Nukem* game). The final game is *Duke Nukem Advance*, which is actually a very impressive port of the PC original, but doesn't really offer much over the superior *Duke Nukem 3D: Total Meltdown*.

The next collection features *Goodboy Galaxy* and *Witch N' Wiz* and both are very good. *Goodboy Galaxy* is the highlight, being a Game Boy Advance game in the style of *Super Metroid*, albeit with a far cuter theme. It's blessed with some excellent level design and some truly gorgeous visuals, while the temporary loss of key items at certain points of the game means you really need to think about how you approach

each area. *Witch N' Wiz* is a puzzle game for the NES and it reminds us a little bit of the Game Gear classic *Popn's*. Here though, you need to collect all the on-screen creatures before you can exit the stage. It also gets progressively trickier across its 100 plus levels.

The final collection is from Neofid Studios and is by far our favourite as it features two Mega Drive gems, *Astebros* and *Demons Of Asteborg*. *Astebros* is a highly entertaining roguelight that allows you to team up with a friend (on the Evercade VS at least) to tackle the game's procedurally generated dungeons. *Demons Of Asteborg* on the other hand is an excellent action game in the style of the early *Castlevanias* that features lots of fighting, tremendous bosses and challenging gameplay.

All four collections feature the usual lavish presentation from Blaze and great emulation. If you're limited by budget we'd pick the excellent collection from Neofid Studios. *

In a nutshell

A solid collection of games from Blaze, but if we could only pick one we'd go for Neofid's killer combo of *Demons Of Asteborg* and *Astebros*.



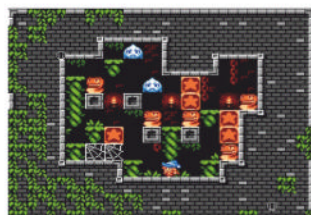
» [Evercade] *Duke Nukem Advance* is a nice inclusion, but it's unlikely you'd choose this over the PlayStation version in *Collection 1*.



» [Evercade] Is anyone else convinced this hero from *Astebros* is the spitting image of He-Mario's Orko?



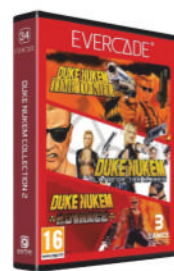
» [Evercade] We'd have preferred the Saturn port, but this PlayStation offering is still fun.



» [Evercade] *Witch N' Wiz* is a lovely puzzle game. Be warned, it gets hard quite quickly.



» Score **81%**



» Score **70%**



» Score **86%**



» Score **91%**

* PICK OF THE MONTH

Sonic Dream Team

» System: iPad, iPhone » Buy it for: Apple Arcade exclusive (£6.99 per month) » Buy it from: App Store



Doctor Robotnik is up to no good once again, having sought out an ancient artefact called the Reverie which can turn the dreams of the pure-hearted

into reality. Being a villainous sort, the spiteful scientist has kidnapped Cream as a virtuous conduit for his wicked wishes, only for the Reverie's guardian Ariem (REM, geddit?) to trap him in his own dream. Sonic and friends are also there, and it's their job to prevent a real nightmare in this 3D platform adventure.

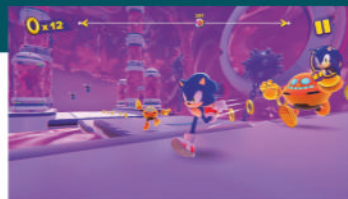
This setup is pretty familiar, as is the fact that the characters have their own unique abilities – Sonic and Amy can perform the Light Speed Dash, Tails and Cream can fly, while Knuckles and Rouge can climb walls. However, the level design here is fairly atypical for a 3D *Sonic* game as each is designed to accommodate all three skill sets. What's more, there are plenty of wider, more open sections that encourage a bit of exploration and practice to determine the best route.

The game's structure is well suited for these mobile devices too. Missions are short and varied, ranging from high-speed races against the clock to item hunts, and you're encouraged to return to past stages as you unlock new characters, in order to find orbs that open up later stages. Some stages require you to choose characters with specific skills, most notably the boss battles, ensuring that you'll become familiar with all three types.

Sonic Dream Team is a nice-looking game and offers a graphical quality slider for older Apple devices, but the music isn't quite as memorable as the series' usual offerings. The game also is much more enjoyable with a controller than the touchscreen, which isn't ideal for a mobile game. Still, Sega Hardlight has created one of the most interesting 3D *Sonic* games on the most unlikely of platforms – overlook it at your peril.

>>

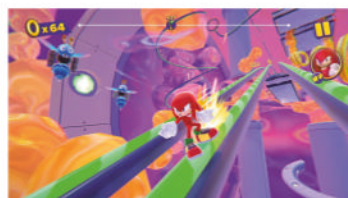
Score **86%**



» [iPhone] The dream setting allows for some pretty interesting stage designs.



» [iPhone] Some of the springs are enormous, ensuring that it's easier to hit them at high speeds.



Double Dragon Collection

» System: Switch » Buy it for: £24.95
» Buy it from: Retail

While all six featured games are available digitally, this Japanese offering is currently the only way to enjoy them as a physical release. It's worth shelling out for, as even with import charges, it's the same price as buying them separately and offers plenty of brawling for your cash.

Super Double Dragon and *Double Dragon Advance* are the collection's highlights, but the three NES games are also fun, with only *DD 4* disappointing. While the emulation isn't quite up to M2's standard, it's still good and there's a slew of display options, regional versions for the later games and even online play for *Double Dragon 1-4*. It feels a little cheap, but this is still an essential collection for fighting fans.

DARRAN JONES

>>

Score **83%**

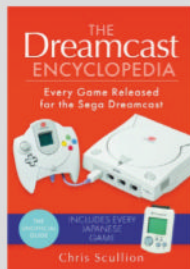
The Dreamcast Encyclopedia

» Buy it for: £30
» Buy it from: pen-and-sword.co.uk

Chris Scullion is back with his latest console encyclopedia, this time covering every official Sega Dreamcast game.

Like his previous *N64 Encyclopedia*, this book benefits from a relatively small library that allows each game more space across the 256 pages, and as before entries are always entertaining but occasionally light on opinion. Wrestling games are also given more space than they perhaps deserve throughout. It's unfortunate but understandable that there's no representation of the brilliant unofficial releases that have kept the console active, but the book does cover every Japanese game and that's where it may be most valuable – with the Dreamcast hosting plenty of visual novels that require Japanese reading ability, this book can aid anyone looking to discover some more accessible but less celebrated imports.

NICK THORPE



Shinorubi

» System: Switch (tested), PC, PS4, PS5, Xbox One, Xbox Series S/X
» Buy it for: £17.99 » Buy it from: Online, retail

Last Boss 88's new shmup doesn't disappoint when it comes to value for money. In addition to numerous difficulty modes, *Shinorubi* offers a staggering number of ways to play, including Caravan modes, Boss Rush options, one mode that replaces your bomb with a shield and even an option that focusses on collecting cute pigs. What a pity then that its core gameplay is lacking. Bullet patterns feel a little too messy, your ship's firepower takes up too much of the screen, and the decision to scroll vertically on a horizontal layout means everything feels too zoomed in. If *Shinorubi*'s core mechanics matched its game modes it would be exceptional.

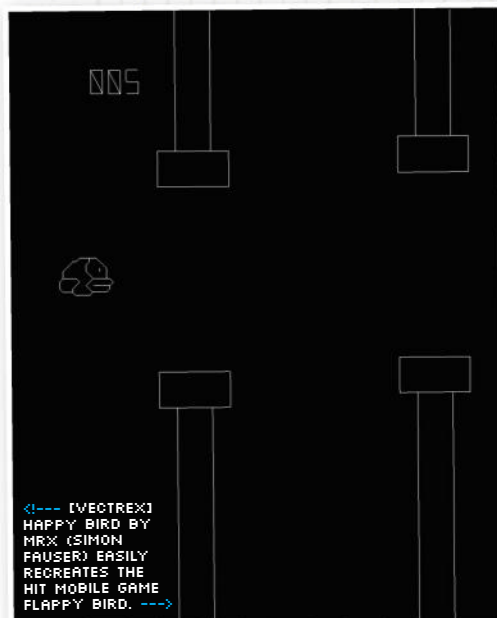
DARRAN JONES

>>

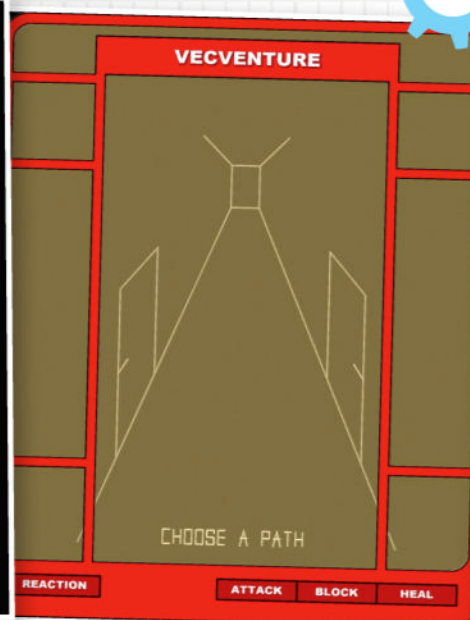
Score **70%**

THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT

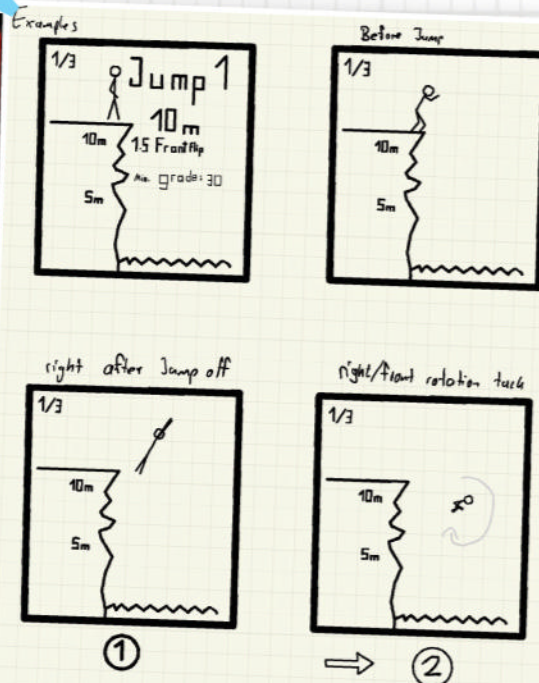
<YOUR MONTHLY GUIDE TO EVERYTHING HAPPENING IN THE HOMEBREW SCENE>



<!-- [VECTREX]
HAPPY BIRD BY
MRX (SIMON
FAUSER) EASILY
RECREATES THE
HIT MOBILE GAME
FLAPPY BIRD. -->



REACTION ATTACK BLOCK HEAL



<!-- CONCEPT DRAWINGS FOR CLIFF JUMP BY
PIXELBLAST (PAUL FINKBEINER). -->

<MAIN HEADER>

VALIANT VECTORS

<INTRO> IT'S BEEN A BUSY TIME KEEPING UP WITH THE CODING COMPETITIONS - THE MSXDEV.ORG COMPETITION AND THE INTERACTIVE FICTION COMPETITION (IFCOMP.ORG) BOTH ANNOUNCED THEIR RESULTS RECENTLY. IN THIS ISSUE, WE TAKE A BRIEF LOOK AT THE TOP GAMES FROM THE CPCDEV2023, LEARN HOW A UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR GOT INTO PROGRAMMING THE VECTREX, HOW A SPECTRUM CLASSIC IS BEING REMADE FOR THE C64 AND INVESTIGATE A CUTE GAME BOY COLOR GAME THAT HAS BEEN SUCCESSFULLY FUNDED ON KICKSTARTER </INTRO>

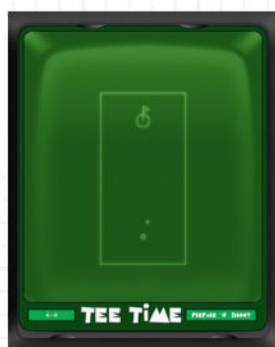
<INTRO> PROFESSOR PEER JOHANNSEN OF PFORZHEIM UNIVERSITY IN GERMANY IS RUNNING AN UNUSUAL YEARLY PROGRAMMING COURSE, THE VECTREX ACADEMY </INTRO>

001 <BODY> Peer Johannsen longed for a Vectrex.
002 "I do not recall how long I pestered my parents until
003 they finally gave in and surprised me on Christmas
004 1982," he says. Peer's family did not have a TV,
005 so the Vectrex with its own built-in monitor, was
006 perfect. "While I played, I constantly wondered
007 how this magic was possible. How come objects
008 were moving across the screen? How could I
009 control spaceships, only to be beaten?" Peer's
010 curiosity included trying to take the Vectrex apart
011 and would later see him programming a series of

012 home computers before studying computer science.
013 Working in the industry and Silicon Valley, he took
014 up his current position as a professor of computer
015 science and software engineering in 2010.
016 In 2017, faced with designing an advanced
017 programming course, an idea emerged. "I started
018 to think about using an old computer, to effectively
019 demonstrate the difference between efficient
020 and non-efficient programs," Peer explains.
021 "Programmers who grew up in the Eighties think
022 differently, we used every trick and hack we could

ACADEMY ACHIEVEMENTS

<INTRO> OUR TOP PICKS, WHICH ARE ONLINE AT



<!-- THE CONCEPT ART FOR JAN
VOLZ'S TEE TIME ALSO HELPED
CREATE THE OVERLAY. -->

TEE TIME

by Jan Volz (apollo)

<This superb mini-golf game works well with its overlay, and later holes add switches and teleporters to increase the fun.>



VECVENTURE

by Alexander Bauer

(R4G3H4CK3R)

<A fully fledged *Rogue*-style RPG with plenty of different enemies and effective use of the controller's multiple buttons.>



WETCAT

by Sebastian Leininger (nop)

<Reminiscent of *Splatoon*'s Squid Jump, keep your cat above water by jumping between platforms to collect fish and scratch enemies.>



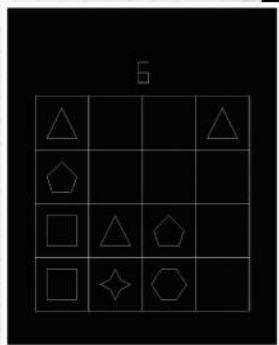
VECDRIFT

by stackoverflow

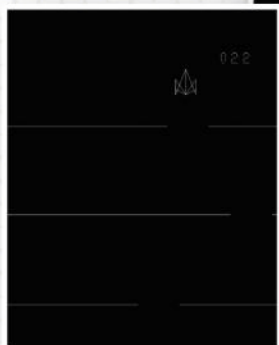
<There are certainly other Vectrex driving games available out there, but this has a starting choice of car and smooth handling.>

NEW GAMES NEEDED

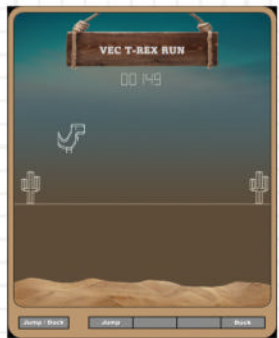
Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: retrogamer@futurenet.com



<!-- [VECTREX] MARTINA GRIFO'S 1024 REPLACED NUMBERS WITH SHAPES IN HOMAGE TO THREES AND ITS IMITATORS. -->



<!-- [VECTREX] FLY HIGH BY MENTALERROR (HENRI KLEILE) SAW YOUR SHIP PILOTING THROUGH THE GAPS IN THE VERTICALLY SCROLLING WALLS. -->



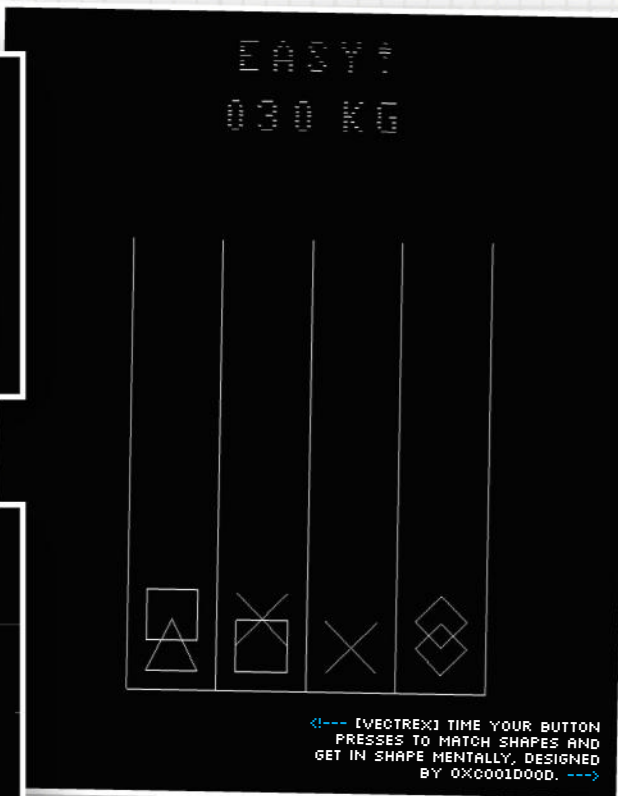
<!-- [VECTREX] RECREATING THE CLASSIC GOOGLE OFFLINE GAME WITH VEC T-REX RUN BY JANNIK WIMMER. -->

[BIT.LY/VECTREX2023](http://bit.ly/vectrex2023) </INTRO>



FREERIDGE
by Adrian Thees (the_last_bitbender)

<A cute infinite runner where the penguin snowboards down the slope, jumping over boulders and ducking under trees.>



<!-- [VECTREX] TIME YOUR BUTTON PRESSES TO MATCH SHAPES AND GET IN SHAPE MENTALLY, DESIGNED BY 0XCOOLD00D. -->

to improve our programs. Then I got a call from my father, he was cleaning out his attic and found my childhood Vectrex. I had the solution. We would program our own games for the Vectrex."

Peer quickly found a network of support. "I had already read about Vectrex homebrew activities, and I started researching the necessary tools. I got great support and help from members of the community. Coding in assembly language is great, and I had done it before, but today it is a long-lost art which unfortunately is not taught anymore. The language our students learn in their first semester is C. I spent months setting up a toolchain and creating a C development environment for the Vectrex."

Real hardware also plays an important part. "We use emulators in development, but constantly try and test the code on the real thing," Peer says. "Seeing their own programs run on a real retro Vectrex console fascinates the students and is the big fun factor and motivational attraction of this class. Over the years, we perfected the C programming setup, bought two more consoles for use in the classroom, and the phrase Vectrex Academy was coined, which has since become a regular part of the curriculum."

Does Peer have a favourite from 2023's projects (bit.ly/vectrex2023)? "I try to support each student's project as best as I can," is the diplomatic reply. "Grading must not be influenced by how much I like a project idea or the chosen genre. This year's participants all had a very strong motivation and love for programming." So when will the next Academy take place? "Usually, there is a Vectrex Academy in each spring term semester (March to July). However, in spring 2024 I will be on a research sabbatical, not teaching any classes. The next Vectrex Academy will be in 2025."



<!-- [AMSTRAD CPC] IT'S CHUN-LI VERSUS GUILLE AT THE AIR FORCE BASE IN MIGHTY STREET FIGHTER. -->

NEWSBYTES

<INTRO> ALL THE LATEST NEWS, HANDILY ARRANGED BY FORMAT </INTRO>

<Amstrad CPC: *Mighty Street Fighter* (pictured above) from AmstradGGP should be available by the time you read this. Fight your way to amstradggp.com/>

<BBC Micro: Matthew Atkinson released *Repton 3 Redux*, requiring 16K Sideways RAM, which adds levels from the data disks and multiple improvements. Go digging for it at bit.ly/repton3-redux/>

<C64: *Evil Dungeon II* is the dungeon-crawling sequel to 2022's *Evil Dungeon*. Both games are available digitally via retroarts.itch.io or physically at shop.retroarts.de/>

<Dreamcast: DreamSDK is a new Windows-based development system, with dedicated support on the DCEmulation forum. You can find more information at dreamsdk.org/>

<Game Boy: Tony Wang's GB BASIC is a "retro fantasy console" with built-in asset editors (for tiles, maps, sprites and sound) that can export a Game Boy-compatible ROM. It's available at bit.ly/gb-basic/>

<NES: The NESDev Compo '23 received 24 entries – but sadly, developer Rani Barker (creator of *Senseless City*) passed away before the competition closed. May she rest in peace. Visit bit.ly/nesdev2023 for more info.>

<PICO-8: The fantasy console can run *Doom* – thanks to Freds72's magnificent *Poom*, with music by Paranoid Cactus. Play it at bit.ly/poom You can also try the superb demake of *Stardew Valley* by Taxicomics (bit.ly/pico-valley) and Paul Hammond's adaptations of arcade classics *Mappy* and *Carnival* (pahammond.itch.io/), while *Suika Game* fans will enjoy Johan Peitz's *Cosmic Collapse* (bit.ly/cosmic-collapse/).>

<ZX Spectrum: As well as a physical cassette by Cronosoft, you can download *Forest Escape: A Knight's Quest* by Irata Hack and donate to the PKD Foundation charity. Start your quest at bit.ly/forestescape-zx/>

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates



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retrogamer@futurenet.com

CHAMPION CODER

ROBERT TROUGHTON

<INTRO> DEMO CODER ROBERT 'RAISTLIN' TROUGHTON IS WORKING WITH ARTIST JON EGGETON TO REMASTER AN ULTIMATE CLASSIC </INTRO>

<INFO FROM: THAILAND WEBSITE: C64DEMO.COM FORMAT: C64 WORKING ON: SABRE WULF REMASTERED >>

HOW DID YOUR SABRE WULF PROJECT START?

I'd seen Jon Eggeton's reimagining of a loader screen – and he'd redrawn a lot of the in-game graphics too. I thought I could just replace the old graphics with new ones – how hard could it be? I needed to find extra memory and the screen-draw routine was using the most inefficient routine imaginable. I realised that it would be more work to patch the game than to rewrite it... and Jon was happy with the idea too.

WHAT IS YOUR DEVELOPMENT ENVIRONMENT LIKE AND WHO ELSE IS INVOLVED?

Much of the work is in C++ – for converting graphics, generating tables, etc. I use Visual Studio Professional along with Kick Ass 6510 assembler, GitHub, Sparkle (our demo group's disk-loading system), and SPOT (for optimising graphics). A script builds the entire game, or only parts that have changed, and creates a disk image to test.

We have Jon Eggeton doing design and graphics, Psych8580



<!-- ROBERT'S TIME IN THE GAME INDUSTRY SAW HIM WORK ON DESTRUCTION DERBY, GEARS OF WAR AND SEA OF THIEVES. -->

(Marcin Majdzik) on audio, and Sparta for advice on compression and loading (he wrote *Sparkle*). I'm using a few demo tricks to make this game faster and smoother. We have a 'bitmap scroll' intro as Sabreman falls into the jungle – with parallax trees and credits on top.

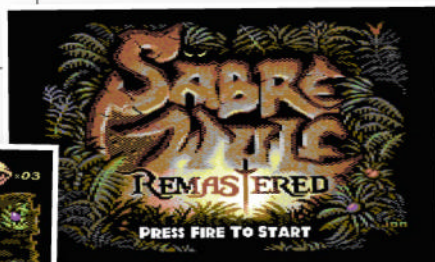
ARE THERE ANY MAJOR GAMEPLAY CHANGES?

The gameplay code is completely rewritten. We're trying to keep the best bits with some improvements, only changing bits we felt were missing, or those which we hated. We've extended the screen to 320x200px in size compared to the original's 256x184px. We've added a map screen, and we've made the player character movement much smoother and more responsive. The original used software sprites in places and those were badly done (flickering and jerky on the screen). We're only using hardware sprites so it's all going to feel a lot cleaner. We could be finished sometime around mid-2024, maybe a little earlier, if we can keep this momentum going.

<!-- [C64] SABREMAN WHIPS OUT HIS MIGHTY SWORD TO DEAL WITH A JUNGLE DWELLER. -->



<!-- [C64] THE NEW FOG OF WAR MAP SHOWS WHERE YOU HAVE BEEN, WITH THE AMULET GRADUALLY ASSEMBLED IN THE TOP BORDER -->



<!-- [C64] JON EGGETON'S GORGEOUS TITLE SCREEN FOLLOWS THE CLEVER INTRO SEQUENCE. -->



DATA BURST

SNK VS CAPCOM

<INFO BY: FORMAT: C64 CARTRIDGE CREDITS: RETROGL, JONEGG PRICE: FREE DOWNLOAD PLUS PDF MANUAL WEB: BIT.LY/SVC-64-UPDATE BIT.LY/SVC-64-MANUAL2 >>

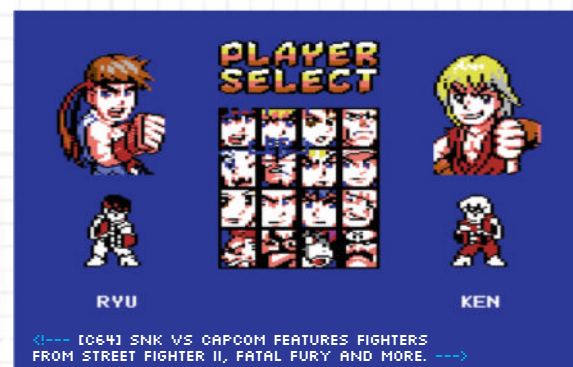
<BODY> Drawing inspiration from the Neo Geo Pocket games, and graced with Chibi-style sprites and gorgeous backgrounds, this excellent fighter offers 16 brawlers from different fighting franchises. Story Mode follows a single character worldwide, with each getting a unique storyline. Versus lets two players fight head-to-head, while a solo player can try Training Mode. Tournament allows up to eight human or computer players to take part in a series of bouts, including playoffs to determine overall position. There are options to tweak the difficulty and time limit, while the control methods have been adapted for both one and two-button joysticks and joypads. The cartridge format allows rapid loading of presentation screens with each character having an alternative colour scheme – the humorous taunts before and after fights are also a nice touch. Fighters have a Guard gauge that can be depleted (or undone by a Guard Break attack), and a Super gauge with two power levels for screen-filling special moves. Pulling off those moves will take some practice, as the computer is a stern opponent even in Normal mode. The game really shines in its two-player mode, offering some frantic to-and-fro battles. This is easily the best-looking C64 fighting game to date, with plans for an enhanced Stronger Edition with 16 extra characters. If you own a C64 you need this game in your collection. </BODY>

SCORE:

90%



<!-- [C64] GUILLE AND ZANGIEF TAUNT EACH OTHER BEFORE THE FIGHT BEGINS. -->



<!-- [C64] SNK VS CAPCOM FEATURES FIGHTERS FROM STREET FIGHTER II, FATAL FURY AND MORE. -->

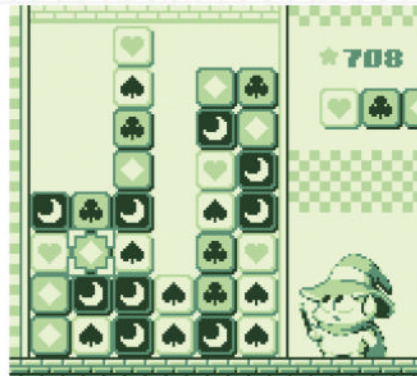
NEW GAMES NEEDED

Our new email address is waiting for all your homebrew news, previews and more: retrogamer@futurenet.com

THE HOMEBREWER'S KIT



<!-- [GAME BOY] THE GREAT GRAPHICS AND MUSIC ADD TO THE CUTE FACTOR OF FYDO'S MAGIC TILES. -->



<!-- [GAME BOY] FYDO LOOKS WORRIED AS THE TOWER OF TILES TEETERS TERRIFYINGLY CLOSE TO THE TOP. -->

FYDO'S MAGIC TILES

[INFO FORMAT: GAME BOY CREDITS: TOM SUTTON (ART BY GRAYLURE, MUSIC BY MAX CHAPPELL)]
PRICE: DIGITAL \$4.00 (INCLUDES PDF AND SOUNDTRACK), PHYSICAL CART \$40 PLUS SHIPPING
WEB: [BIT.LY/FYDOS-MAGIC-TILES](http://bit.ly/fydos-magic-tiles) />

<BODY> This cute puzzle game has a brilliant physical edition assembled by Tom Sutton, with the cartridge sitting in a metal tin and coming with stickers and a fold-out manual. The in-game action resembles the classic *Panel De Pon*/Puzzle League games – new tiles fall one at a time, letting FYDO swap pairs of tiles. Lines of four or more matching tiles are removed, while matching six starts a combo that lasts as long as you keep making matches. Bubbles must be cleared by making a match next to them, and it is game over when the tiles reach the top of the bin. While it is demanding at higher levels (particularly if you want the 17 unlockable Star Tiles) it offers plenty of pure puzzling with a charming main character. It's a great offering for puzzle fans. **</BODY>**

SCORE:

81%



<!-- [AMSTRAD CPC] DRIVE AND FIGHT YOUR WAY AROUND SUGAR CITY, AS THE DIALOGUE EXPLAINS YOUR CURRENT MISSION. -->



<!-- [AMSTRAD CPC] IN PAULINA'S POTIONS, THE SPELL BOOK IS OPEN AT THE WALK ON WATER SPELL. -->

CPCRETRODEV 2023 COMPETITION

[INFO FORMAT: AMSTRAD CPC CREDITS: HOSTED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF ALICANTE]
PRICE: FREE TO DOWNLOAD WEB: [BIT.LY/CPCDEV2023](http://bit.ly/cpcdev2023) />

<BODY> With 30 entries and sponsored prizes, there were bonus points for references to *Super Cauldron* and the CPC's "commercial demise" in 1993. In third place was *Paulina's Potions* (Leosoft), using interlaced graphics best seen on a real CRT or in RetroVirtualMachine. Paulina collects ingredients to mix potions and collect diamonds. Second was *Sugar City* (Voxel Tower), a technically ambitious *Grand Theft Auto*-style game with day and night cycles and multiple gangs to fight or avoid. The winning entry was *Alloy Box* (CNG Soft), a fast-paced action game inspired by the original *Metal Gear*. **</BODY>**

PROCESSING

<INTRO> A CUTE CAT INVESTIGATES IN GOLOSO GAMES' GAME BOY COLOR PREQUEL – INSPECTOR WAFFLES: EARLY DAYS **</INTRO>**

<BODY> The origins of this prequel are quite unusual. "I found a game jam where the theme was 'cat and dog protagonists', and imagined a case where a cat doesn't land on his paws," says developer Yann. "I thought of a funny name, and *Waffles* came quickly!"

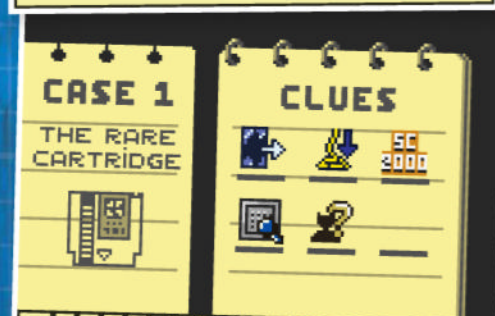
The original point-and-click game was for PC, while the GBC prequel has been successfully Kickstarted. "I had much more to tell about my characters, especially their early days; how *Waffles* started as an inspector," continues Yann, mentioning the game was created on GBStudio as, "It's the perfect game engine for beginners." *Inspector Waffles* is notable for its story and clever interrogation system. "I 'borrowed' the system from *LA Noire* and adapted it to make it simpler (no face recognition), adding the clues list," explains Yann. Clicking on a clue or item unlocks new areas and lines of questioning, allowing *Waffles* to track down suspects.

So what else is Yann currently working on? "I already have a point-and-click adventure in progress, with time-travel mechanics, named *Pixel's Time Paradox*. I hope someday I'll make more stories about my cat and dog characters." We hope so as well. **</BODY>**

<!-- [GAME BOY COLOR] THE DEMO CASE FEATURED THE THEFT OF A RARE VIDEOGAME CARTRIDGE WITH THREE SUSPECTS. -->



This is where the stolen cartridge was...



WAFFLES: Don't play games with me, Jeff.

HOT TOPIC

RETROBATES MULL OVER THE SCENE'S MOST INTRIGUING ISSUES

CONSOLE WARS

The team discuss the console flaming of the Nineties



DARRAN JONES



NICK THORPE



TIM EMPEY

» Here's Nintendo suggesting that even Sonic was desperate to play Mario's new game.

Squabbling over the latest home computer was commonplace during the Eighties, but it seemed to reach fever pitch as the consoles began to dominate the Nineties. The team rolls up their sleeves and gets stuck in.

DARRAN

Computer wars were obviously a big deal in the Eighties, but it became really aggressive when the consoles came along. Why do we think that is?

NICK

I think a lot of it comes down to the people who were profiting from the console wars pushing them, doesn't it? Sega and Nintendo started to take plenty of direct shots at one another in their marketing,

way more than you'd see in the Eighties. Magazines printed plenty of pictures of Sonic and Mario beating each other up too, to stoke the fires and promote the feeling that readers were part of an in-group.

DARRAN

Ah yes, there was some pretty aggressive marketing during that period. Do you remember, Tim?

TIM

Yeah the whole "Sega does what Nintendo doesn't" campaign was pretty funny, though I don't remember Nintendo sticking the knife in quite that far.

“It all feels quite innocent in retrospect, compared to today”

NICK THORPE

DARRAN

I'm sure that Nick will give us some cracking examples of Nintendo fighting back.

NICK

Yeah, Nintendo definitely took its fair share of shots. "Sega owners... dream on" for *Street Fighter II*, or, "Why did the hedgehog cross the road? To get to *Super Mario Land 2*."

DARRAN

It's worth pointing out that it happened on the magazines of the time as well. I can remember the *Official Nintendo Magazine* using terms like

'GreyStation', which came across as a little childish. Did you both notice this as well?

NICK

I sure did, and the Sega counterpart

» More proof (if any was needed) that magazines of the time stoked the flames against rival consoles.



'Dreampants' which was just incredibly crap.

TIM

We got mocked on *Cube* whenever we were moving a GameCube about using the ACTUALLY REALLY USEFUL handle. The *XBUM* (that's what we called *XBM* anyway) guys said it looked like we all had handbags.

NICK

I'd carry a handbag if it played *F-Zero GX*, but I digress.

DARRAN

Hah! There's nothing like a bit of friendly animosity between mags to keep the spirits raised! Who remembers all the crazy artwork sent in by readers? Some of that was very severe.

NICK

I was kind of shocked when I revisited it all for issue 205. Joe Musashi slicing Mario up, Sonic being run down by a bus – primary school kids can be pretty warped, really.

DARRAN

Wasn't one of them wearing a Swastika on their sleeve?

TIM

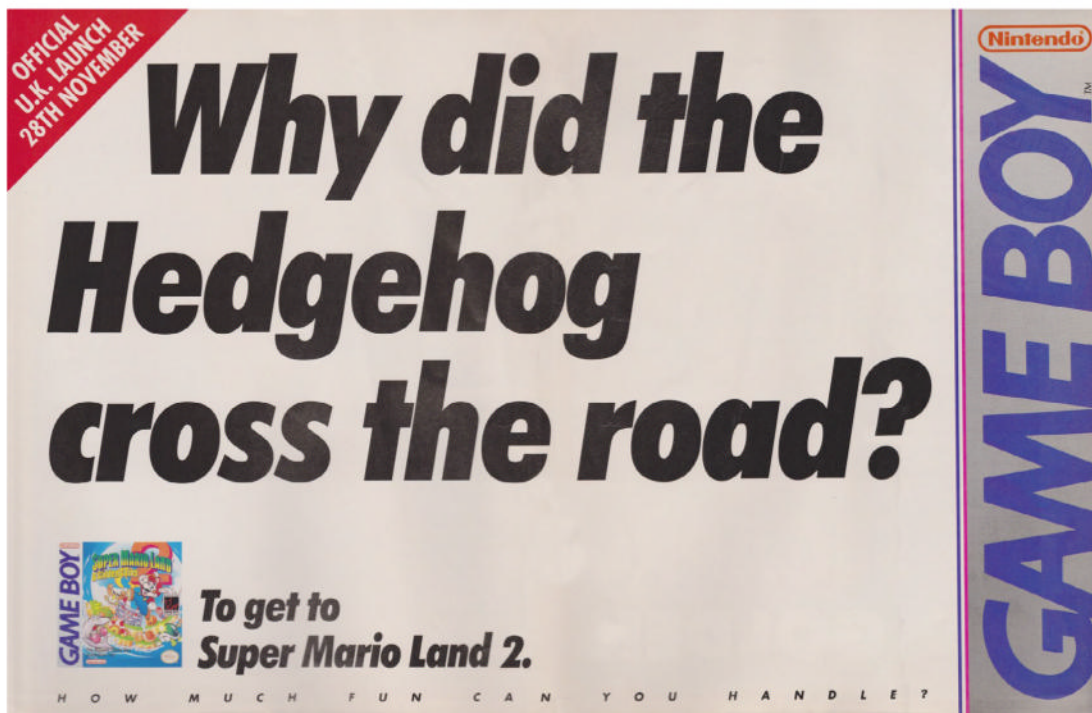
That's horrific, I don't think you can use the excuse of it being a different time back then. Some things, maybe, but not that.

NICK

That was Sonic in *Sega Power*. They just described him as "right wing" and that's crazy, I'm pretty sure the world got the message about the Nazis back in the Thirties.

DARRAN

Yet another reason for Mario fans to not like Sonic. Do





» Sega highlighting why you should ignore the SNES. That SNES pile would grow significantly larger in later years.

we think one of the reasons that there was so much division during the Eighties, and especially Nineties, was because most people could only afford to buy one system?

NICK

Undoubtedly. I remember being very impressed by *Donkey Kong Country* on my cousin's SNES, but I'd never have admitted that in the playground.

DARRAN

I'd have got some very strange looks if I was discussing that in the playground. I was 21 at the time.

TIM

So I was rocking the Mega Drive and then PlayStation in the Nineties, screw your SNESes and your Saturns. What were you guys playing on?

NICK

I had the same trajectory, I was committed to the Sega cause but the Saturn wasn't viable by the time I moved to 32-bit, so I ended up on Team PlayStation. I'd calmed down on the fanboy front for the most part by then, but my twin cousins had an N64 and were total wind-ups, so I used to say things like, "Nothing on your console compares to *Final Fantasy VII*," just to annoy them.

DARRAN

I was kind of all over the place.

Streetfighter II.



Sega owners... dream on.



If you want to play Streetfighter II, it's got to be Super Nintendo.

» Marketing was aggressive throughout the Nineties, and Nintendo wasn't afraid to take shots at the competition.

SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

Will you ever reach the end?

I flipped and flopped between the Mega Drive and SNES in the early Nineties, had a brief affair with the Amiga 1200, spent the back end of the Nineties on the Saturn and N64 before selling it all off in 1999 as we were expecting our first child.

NICK

I've got to say it all feels quite innocent in retrospect, compared to some of the online vitriol that you see today. Everything was face to face and it was mostly with your friends, so it never got too serious.

DARRAN

That's a good point. I see a lot of online bickering on my Twitter feed and amazingly a lot of it is 8-bit based and it's like, "You must be 50 now, is there any need for that?" Saying that, I'll still mention the superiority of NTSC gaming over PAL occasionally, which does annoy some people. So before we go, what's everyone's favourite modern system? Mine's the Switch because of all the shmups you can play on it.

NICK

It's got to be the PlayStation 5, Kratos could definitely beat up Master Chief.

TIM

Xbox roolz, Playstation droolz! ★



» Console squabbles extended to the handhelds as well, with the Game Gear and Lynx providing competition for the Game Boy.



» [Amiga] There may have been a big focus on consoles, but home computers like the Amiga remained popular during the early to mid-Nineties.



» While the console wars were a big thing in the West it was a different story in Japan, with the SNES dominating and the Mega Drive trailing NEC's PC Engine.

PICK A SIDE

Readers on who they backed in the Nineties

EREIAMJH

I was undecided between Saturn and PlayStation, but the *Tekken 2* attract mode swayed me. I don't regret the decision at all, but during the next gen I got a second-hand Saturn, chipped it for imports, and caught up.

Third Dwarf

Team Sega. Mega Drive to the almighty Saturn. Nintendo won me over with the N64 but by then my fanboy mentality was "anyone but Sony".

Pedro G.

Team Nintendo, definitely. They had (and still do) the best exclusive games on their consoles!

RaccoonCloud

I was Team Nintendo and for that I was actually not invited to a birthday party at this awesome softplay and pizza place for saying *Super Mario 64* was better than *Crash Bandicoot*. "Go play your baby games," I heard that a lot!

Retro Game Den

I grew up as Team Sega, although I only ever had a Master System, and missed out on the Mega Drive unless I was at a friend's house. I moved from that to Sony with the PlayStation but have tried to be as multi-platform as possible since the PS2/GameCube/Xbox/Dreamcast days.

OldAndNewVideoGames

Team Amiga until 1995. Then, Team DOS. And around 2000, I realised that I really was Team Gaming all that time, and taking sides was just childish and limited the number of games you get to experience.

David Sheppard

Started my journey with the NES but soon switched allegiance to Sega. I chose the Saturn as my hill to die on, and I stand by my decision. Still haven't owned a Sony or Microsoft console.

Keith

Nintendo for the early Nineties, and then I advanced to Sony for the PlayStation era!

Newbie Coder

None really, in the Nineties I was using my Amiga A500 and then A1200, I had zero interest in consoles.

lunatic skies

I was Team Nintendo for NES/SNES, then Team PSX, then Team Xbox.

Llama King

My friends and I were all about Nintendo but my brother was the Sega man.

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

READERS TAKE US THROUGH THE RETRO KEYHOLE



FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Phil Garner's love for gaming starts at home

BIO

NAME:
Phil 'Flip' Garner

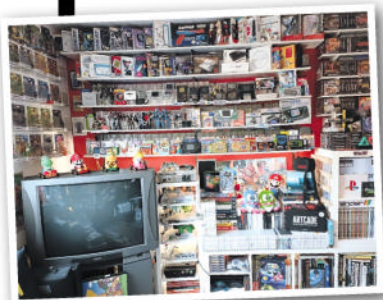
LOCATION:
Halesowen

ESTIMATED VALUE OF COLLECTION:
£25,000

FAVOURITE SYSTEMS:
SNES, PlayStation, N64

FAVOURITE GAMES:
Rainbow Islands and Lylat Wars

INSTAGRAM:
[instagram.com/Flip1982](https://www.instagram.com/Flip1982)



For Phil Garner, his life in gaming is all about family and friends. "My first game system was a Spectrum 48K which was shared with my brother Stephen and dad, David," he tells us. "My dad would play *Gulpman* while my mum was pregnant with me, causing me to writhe around. We [later] perfected *Rainbow Islands* and *Bubble Bobble*, trying to beat my best friend Jon who was a cut above the rest when it came to high scores. We fought for the potions, letter bubbles and diamonds that filled the secret rooms. My dad passed away in June 2023 and as he started this all it's my job to continue it for him. As a tribute to him, I framed a copy of *Gulpman* and displayed it in my living room."

Phil suffered more loss when his friend Jon, known as Retrokit, also passed away in 2023. "Since then, I have felt a massive loss of my Player Two," he explains. "After Jon's passing, I built a *Bubble Bobble* shrine and I've had donations from

friends and family and spent hours tracking down missing manuals and boxes for some of the games."

Phil's love for collecting started around 2004 after receiving a generous gift. "I was gifted a collection of Sega and Nintendo by my friend Laura. Included were a Mega Drive, Game Gear, Game Boy Pocket and some games for each," he says. "This reignited my passion for gaming and collecting and has eventually led to the collection that I have today."

This buzz for collecting is inspired by gaming memories, as well as local gaming shops. "Nostalgia for the graphics, sounds, and Nineties colour palette fuel my fire for collecting, as do the many independent retro gaming shops in my area," Phil tells us. "Shoutouts to Vintage Gamer, Old Skool Gaming, Hidden Chest and Sega Supplies, we are so blessed to have these in our local area."

Phil also enjoys tinkering with the consoles in his collection. "During the pandemic in 2020, I taught myself how to solder and began replacing

the screens on all my handhelds," he explains. "Two years ago, I met Tom, and we started our adventures in Retrobrighting. We both chip in for the materials and equipment and I made our Mark One UV box. We've restored many consoles for collectors and independent game shops. I'm so happy that now I can use my restoration skills to bring happiness to others, it's heartwarming. Also, massive respect to Retro Repair Bear for the recent work that was done to my Atari Lynx and for inspiring me not to give up when having a bad day modding!"

Phil sums up his gaming life by thinking about fun evenings with friends. "For over five years, I've hosted gaming nights for my friends, creating challenges and keeping point tallies, arguing over controllers and crowning the overall winner at the end of the night," he says. "It's the people and the passion for retro that keep me going, finding things that I had forgotten or could never afford when I was young, that warm fuzzy feeling and intense colour overload! One final mention goes to my wife Naomi who has never complained once about my addiction and actively encourages me to buy more!" ★

Got an impressive collection of your own? Contact us at:

f RetroGamerUK @RetroGamer_Mag ✉ retrogamer@futurenet.com

GAME GEAR COLLECTION

"I was so happy to get these and have them complete. The Game Gear is also fully modded and recapped by myself."

AMOUNT PAID: £250 INCLUDING PARTS



GAME BOY GAME KEEPER

"I bought this from the US with help from my late friend Dustin Hamilton RIP."

AMOUNT PAID: \$72



JEWEL IN THE CROWN

VIRTUAL BOY WITH HYPER FLASH 32 GAME CARD

■ "Ever since I first locked eyes on one I have wanted one for the collection. I bought it in 2022 from Vintage Gamer."

PAID: £450



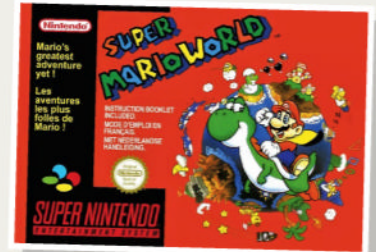
BARGAIN HUNT

Your guide to the rising world of retro prices

THE COVER STAR

SUPER MARIO WORLD

Nothing says the Nineties like the world's most famous plumber in one of his best adventures. PAL prices vary depending on condition, mint copies hit **£130** while a used copy is about **£35**. Those who just wish to play the game can pick up a cart for about **£10**.



PRINCE OF PERSIA

The Apple II version doesn't come up for sale often. A loose disk recently sold for less than **£15** with unsold listings of complete boxes hitting over the **£100** mark.

RICK DANGEROUS

This is a common Atari ST release that can be picked up rather cheaply. Loose disks go for as little as **£2**, although a complete boxed version did sell for **£130** in France recently.

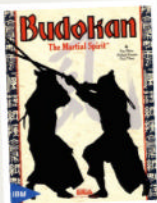


VECTORMAN 2

This exclusive North American release can be bought for under **£10** if you want to just own the cart. Complete boxed versions range from **£20** to **£40** depending on condition.

TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: TURTLES IN TIME

Turtles games always hold value and even loose carts of the Japanese version can easily hit **£30**. Good and complete boxed copies can go for as much as **£140**. Cowabunga!



BUDOKAN: THE MARTIAL SPIRIT

This game is uncommon to find for sale on PC but doesn't always command a high price. Unsold budget copies can be found for under **£20** with complete copies available for around **£75**.

DIABLO II

Blizzard's classic sold millions and loose discs can be bought for **£5**. The complete boxed version will set you back about **£40** and the *Battle Chest* edition is similarly priced.



ADVANCE WARS: DUAL STRIKE

This classic turn-based strategy title has a consistent selling history. You can expect to pay under **£5** for a loose cart and under **£25** if you fancy owning a complete copy.

HOW MUCH?!

ATARI JAGUAR

Anyone who remembers seeing Jaguars in the bargain bin during the Nineties may wish to look away. While the system flopped on release, the collectors market has been on the rise recently and this good condition console recently sold for **£400**.



MY RETRO LIFE

PERSONAL STORIES ABOUT OUR SHARED PASSION

REDISCOVERING THE PS2

How the RetroTink-5X reignited Darran's interest in Sony's console



I've made no secret of the fact that the Xbox is my favourite console from that era of gaming. It not

only got me back into the hobby after a short leave of absence, but arguably led to my current career in videogames. While I did own a PlayStation 2, it never really caught my excitement in the same way, and I missed out on a lot of games exclusive to Sony's system.

Earlier this year I treated myself to a RetroTink-5X. It wasn't cheap, but it has revolutionised the way I game and has led to me having a newfound interest in Sony's console. Most standard-definition consoles look pretty weak on modern TVs, but I've always found the PS2 to be particularly bad. The RetroTink-5X has changed all that. Thanks to using the same settings my cousin Martin came up with after hours of testing, my PS2 on my OLED C8 almost looks as good as it does on my PVM. In some ways it exceeds it, as I can now game on a huge 65-inch screen. I've been so impressed with how PS2 games looked I started seeking out ones I hadn't played, including *Maximo Vs Army Of Zin*, the *Ace Combat* games and several others.

This is where I encountered my first problem, as I never realised how badly optimised a lot of PS2 games were. Most of the games I'd unwittingly bought from eBay and CEX were PAL50, so I decided I had one option – replace all the PAL50 games I'd just bought or already owned with NTSC equivalents. It turns out that's easier said than done though, as importing from the States is far tougher than it

used to be. One of the online stores that was recommended to me in the past had stopped shipping since Brexit, while the vast majority of eBay sellers typically charge around \$20 to post to the UK, and that's before you even consider eBay's built-in custom charges.

I've kind of found a workaround, but it's far from ideal. I found a lot of cheap games I wanted at Lukie Games, which no longer ships to the UK, but does offer free shipping to anywhere in the States if you spend over \$25. After finding a suitable US contact and choosing my games, I then paid £50 to have the games shipped (including a little extra for my kind contact), bringing my total of nine games to £130. It worked out at £14 a game, but it was still far cheaper than buying them individually like I had been.

It's also worth pointing out that all of these purchases came from funds I had generated from the London Gaming Market and sales on eBay and forums. In addition to the nine games I bought from Lukie Games, I've also grabbed an NTSC copy of *Soul Reaver 2* and acquired a couple of high-end shmups, including *Ibara*, *Espgaluda* and *Homura*. Unlike previous times when I've focussed on a system, I'm finding time to complete a lot of games. I've already finished *Castlevania*, *Bujingai*, *Maximo*, *Onimusha 1 & 2*, *Jak & Daxter: The Precursor Legacy*, *Rygar: The Legendary Adventure*, *Dog's Life* and *Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance*.

The high prices of certain games means it's highly unlikely I'll ever replace my existing copies of *God Hand*, *Gradius V* and *Castlevania:*

Curse Of Darkness, but as these particular UK versions already support 60Hz I'm not too fussed. I do have a few games like *Silent Hill: Origins* that are PAL50 only, but as the USA version can

ON THE HUNT

THE PS2 GAMES AND PERIPHERALS THAT I'M STILL LOOKING OUT FOR

OUTRUN 2 SP

I would really love to own a copy of this Sega classic, but it's hard to justify the high price when I already own the PAL release.

BLOOD WILL TELL

The NTSC-U version is stupidly expensive, and the rising price of the PAL version means this is another pipe dream.

GREGORY HORROR SHOW

I've always regretted selling this off and am on the lookout for another copy of it.

CHAMPIONS: RETURN TO ARMS

The PAL version is cheap, but 50Hz, so I'll be on the hunt for a cheap NTSC-U version instead.

GUNCON 2

I love lightgun games and would love to pick one of these up, even though I know it won't work on modern TVs. At least I have my PVM.

hit £200, I can't justify upgrading it. I've been canny about certain purchases as well. Japanese releases like *Time Crisis II* and *Kunoichi* (*Nightshade* over here) are perfectly playable and have large amounts of English text, while *Silent Hill 2*, 3 and 4 have full English options. They're often much cheaper than their PAL/NTSC-U equivalents as well.

To complement my PS2 gaming I've invested in a component lead from Retro Gaming Cables, treated myself to a wireless Retro Fighters Defender controller and preordered a MemCard PRO2 after being highly impressed with the PlayStation version. It's affording me a level of enjoyment that didn't seem possible even ten years ago and it's all been thanks to Mike Chi's wonderful upscaler.

I still love Microsoft's Xbox, but I've now got a newfound respect for the PS2, and it's obvious that if you're looking at both systems purely from a games point of view, it's the far superior machine. It's highly unlikely I'll ever discover just how deep the PS2 rabbit hole goes, but I've certainly enjoyed having a good burrow. ★

"I never realised how badly optimised a lot of PS2 games were"
DARRAN JONES

A SELECTION OF OLD AND NEW SHMUPS FROM MY COLLECTION, INCLUDING SOME GREAT CAVE RELEASES.



HERE'S MY SELECTION FROM LUKIE GAMES. I'VE NOT PLAYED ANYTHING NOT WORTH £14 YET.



STAY ON TARGET

Readers share the systems they're currently focussing on

Tony Cruise

Although there are other distractions from time to time, I'm still collecting for the MSX. I'm up to 660 titles across three generations.

Metris

Since earlier this year I've restarted my PS3 collection, and it's been great fun. The console itself is only £66, and the games are cheap to collect. I never realised how many racing games I used to have until I look back at the collection.

Blob Gaming

I picked up an OG Xbox a few weeks ago and have already blasted my way through a few games. *Halo 2* is amazing still to this day! I've been able to get a ton of games very cheap too!

Bibbz

This year I was focussing on collecting and playing PS1. Next year I'll be going for Dreamcast, Genesis and N64. I would prefer CIBs for Dreamcast and Genesis, but after doing CIBs this year for PS1 I think I'll just be going for loose items. It's just too expensive.

Zahir Hassan

Sega Saturn because there are some great Japanese import games that I missed on release.

Pilko

Atari 2600+ as the kids are loving the simplicity of the gameplay and chasing high scores.

Aled Gravell

The Amiga (via THE A500 Mini). It's an era of gaming that completely passed me by, as I still played my C64 while saving for one of those newfangled console things.

Joe - The OldTech

Outside of buying some newer titles that are on sale, I've been focussing on picking up some PS2 and Xbox titles I missed out on back in the day.

Sean Saunders

The PS1 has definitely been my main focus this year, snagging heavy hitters such as *Persona 1* and *2*, *Valkyrie Profile*, *Einhänder* and *Silent Hill*, along with black-label upgrades for staples like *Legend Of Dragoon* and *Castlevania*.



MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY... SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON SOCIAL MEDIA – [TWITTER.COM/RETROGAMER_MAG](https://twitter.com/RETROGAMER_MAG)

WIN!

Every month, one lucky writer-in will receive a spanking copy of one of our classic retro books. Good luck everyone!



» We can't imagine any collector of Mega Drive games not wanting *Demons Of Asteborg* in their collection (we certainly want it).

COLLECTING HOMEBREW

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I've been enjoying your magazine for about two years now and one thing I've noticed is the ever-growing homebrew scene. This made me think about the Collector's Corner feature you do.

It might be interesting to see what some of the collectors think about new games coming out for classic consoles, especially physical releases. For example, those who like to have complete collections – do these new games even come on their radar? Do they

consider new homebrew games on the same level as the classics in terms of collecting them?

I just thought it might make an interesting feature or an extra question for Collector's Corner. Keep up the great work!

Kind Regards,
Jon

That's a really interesting question, Jon. We can't think why collectors of complete sets wouldn't want modern-day releases in their collections, but we'll certainly ask them going forward.

HARDWARE HEAVEN

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
I really enjoyed the technicality of the Inside The Atari 2600 article. Learning how the hardware and software works was really interesting to me and it was well written. I'd love to see more stuff like this. Perhaps the Saturn would be a good subject? From my limited knowledge that console had quite an unusual hardware setup.

Kind regards,
James Short

We're really glad that you enjoyed the Atari 2600 article, James. Nick learned quite a lot while researching it, so he's delighted that all the hard work has paid off.

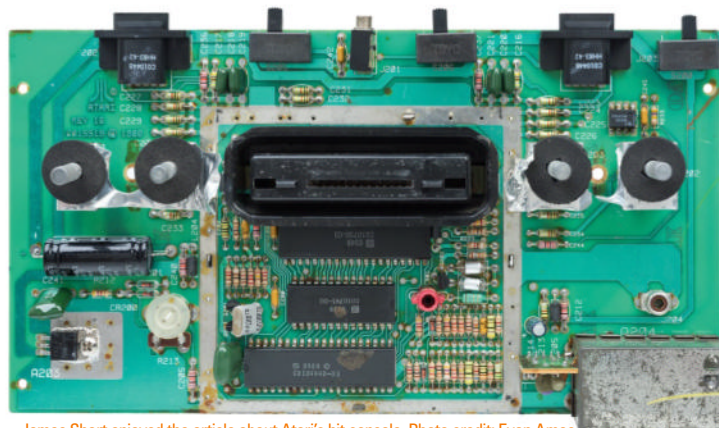


» [PlayStation] It's a shame *Policenauts* never received an official Western release. It's a genuinely great game.

A NEW EXPERIENCE

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
Thank you for the incredible magazine. It's the highlight of the month and it's always on my screen at work!

I recently managed to play and finish Konami's *Policenauts*. It's a game I've always been intrigued by ever since playing *Metal Gear Solid* and seeing all the Easter eggs for it. To finally see how much *Metal Gear* was in *Policenauts* was really neat – especially with Meryl and the mentions of Foxhound. It's a game that had me hooked over the month or so I played it for. I've never played anything like it and it sums up what I like about retro gaming and that's going back to find new and completely different experiences, going back to a time when developers weren't as worried about trying something new.



» James Short enjoyed the article about Atari's hit console. Photo credit: Evan Amos.

STAR LETTER

BUBBLE MEMORIES

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

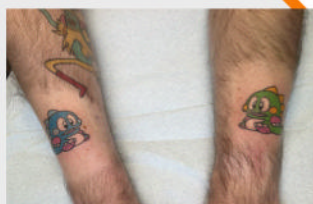
About 36 years ago I discovered *Bubble Bobble*. The graphics were cute, and the music was catchy and never annoying (it was my ringtone for a while a few years back). Twelve-year-old me (and occasionally a friend) would pump out those bubbles and would gradually get further and further without dying. But those last few levels evaded me, and so I would lapse, and my skills in the game would wane.

More recently, I got my daughter to play as Bob to my Bub. She's 14 and not really experienced in games that offer some serious frustrations. So, armed with infinite continues (I can't think how many 10ps I would have pumped into an arcade for these sessions), we spent a few weeks slowly getting better and better until... finally... we zapped Super Drunk. After much high-fiving, I did break it to my kid, that the true ending would require us to beat the game again – but that happened just a few days later (and in a much shorter time).

To celebrate this achievement, I thought I would put myself through some more pain and get a couple of bubble-blowing brontosaurus on my arms. I've attached the photo of my shaved arms, fresh on the chair at the tattooist. My daughter loves my new arm art, and I can finally put this game to bed. Now to find *Rainbow Islands* on a modern console!

Keep up the fine work on the magazine.

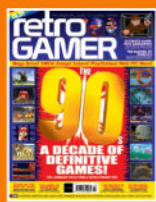
Nick Thierry



» Nick now has a cool permanent reminder of completing *Bubble Bobble* with his daughter.

Nice tats, Nick! They look great and what a great way of preserving an amazing bonding experience with your daughter. Just make sure you tell her *Rainbow Islands* is a single-player game only. We'll send out a book that you can both enjoy.

Don't forget to follow us online for all the latest retro updates



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DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

The RetroTink 4K

It has been an exciting month for hardware. Nick has been putting the Analogue Duo through its paces, while Darran has been testing out the RetroTink 4K. You can read Nick's thoughts on Analogue's new device on page 80, while Darran will hopefully have a piece on the RetroTink 4K ready for the next issue.



» We'll run a Game Boy Advance cover as soon as we've found a suitable angle for it.

Next up, I'm trying to play *Snatcher* in English.
Mike, Cambridge

Congratulations on beating *Policenauts*, Mike. If you're going to play *Snatcher* and don't have access to the Mega-CD version Google Translate should be really helpful.

WHERE'S THE GBA?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,
Let me know if I'm mistaken, but I'm pretty sure you've never done a cover feature on the Game Boy Advance. It's a fantastic handheld and while it's not quite the portable SNES that many suggested at the time, it's still very, very good. I'd love to see a feature highlighting

its more quirkier games or how it came to be as I still have a large number of games for it.
Keep up the great work.
Jason Hutchinson

How weird, we were just discussing how we've not put the Game Boy Advance on the cover yet. Leave it to us Jason and we'll see what we can do.



Your say

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on social media and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...
What game defined the Nineties for you?

» [Nintendo 64] *Super Mario 64* left a big impression on many readers.



Benares

WipEout, the first game I bought on the PS1, at launch.

bVork

Doom had me actually applying mathematics I learned in school to understand the BSP format and raycasting engine. As well as reverse-engineering to understand the wad format, and it was the reason I first got online: to discuss and play it with others. *Doom* is an important part of my life.

Tony Temple

Has to be *Doom* surely. Changed everything for everyone. Then *Duke Nukem* and *Half-Life*.

Goetholon

Beavis And Butthead on the Sega Mega Drive. Sure, not in a good way (it's a bad game), but hey, it emphasises the merging of videogame subculture into broader pop culture.

sjp

GoldenEye has to be considered. The multiplayer element was all anybody spoke about.

Ed

Definitely *Sonic*. It reflected the Nineties perfectly. Fast and flashy without much substance.

Jason

Sensible Soccer. An incredible game that sadly missed the boat when moving to 3D. To me it's the true definition for the shift in gaming from bedroom coding to what we have today.

Pedro G.

Donkey Kong Country was a game-changer in technical terms, but after *Super Mario 64* nothing was ever the same.

Gareth Jackson

Metal Gear Solid and *Tenchu*. They introduced me to my favourite

genre, stealth! I didn't have a PC at the time (still don't!) so never got round to the *Thief* games.

Shaun

It's tough because the Nineties is Mega Drive and PlayStation wrapped up into one for me. Given I spent a whole year of my life playing *Final Fantasy VII*, I'd be tempted to say that. But really, in terms of culture, I'd say *Sonic 2* or *Tomb Raider*, because they were the two big hype games.

Tim Yorke

At the start it was *Sonic*, *Super Mario Kart* and *Street Fighter II*. By the end it was *Resident Evil*, *Gran Turismo* and *WipEout 2097*. Games grew up and so did I.

Alen Milic

So many defining moments. However, seeing Mario running around in a fully realised 3D world was the pinnacle; it had

me drooling! I would visit my local newsagent regularly, to flick through the latest magazines for fresh screenshots.

K Morgan

Street Fighter II and *Doom*. There's gaming before those existed, and there's gaming after them.

Chris Widnes

Sonic The Hedgehog spawned the 'tude' era, which is the most Nineties thing I can think of.

Games Freezer

Street Fighter II was the Nineties game that managed to revive the flagging arcade scene and create queues of kids willing to slap down a 20p to become the new challenger. Then *Street Fighter II* added more fuel to the console war fire by coming out on SNES first which was the ultimate Nineties console.

retro GAMER

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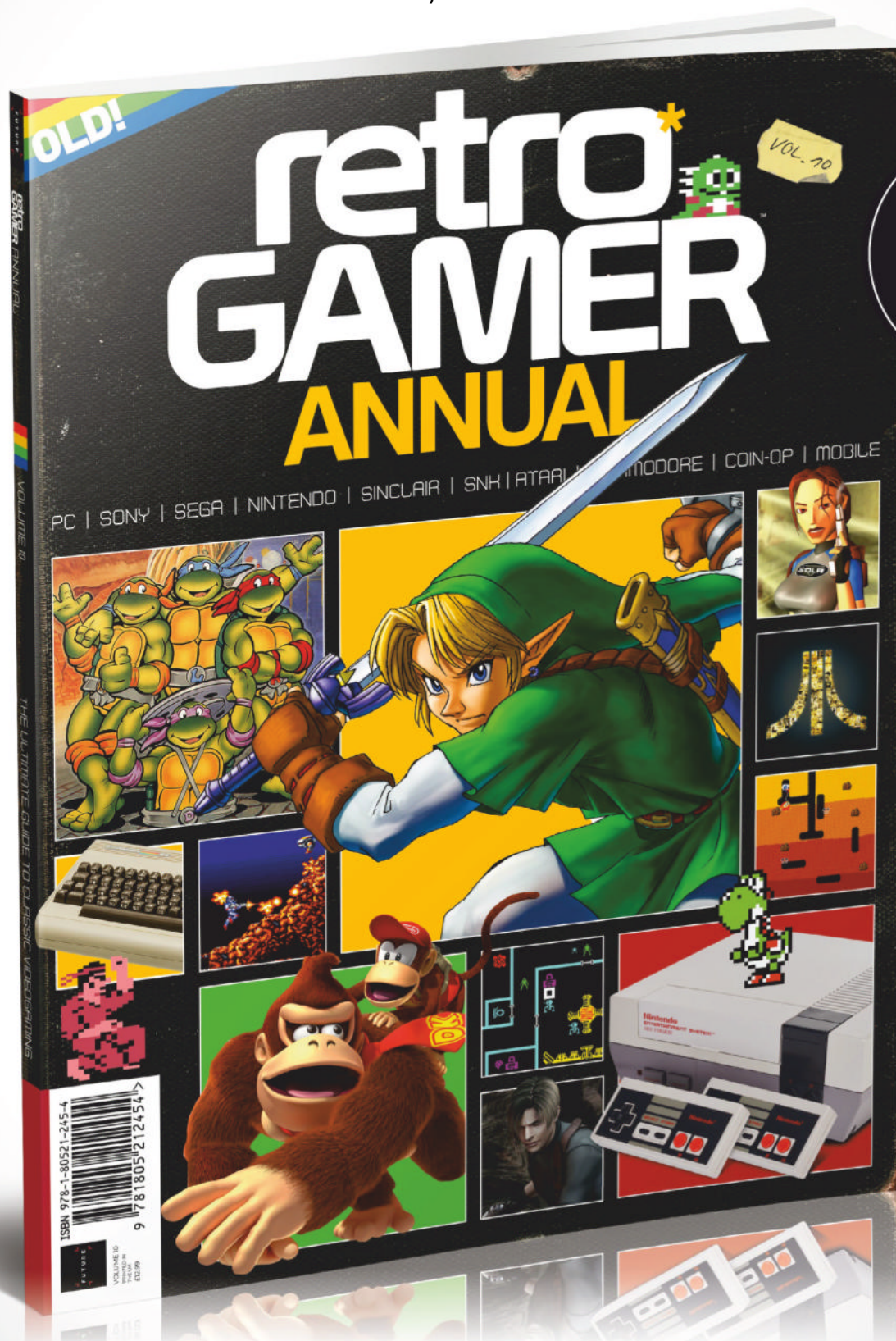
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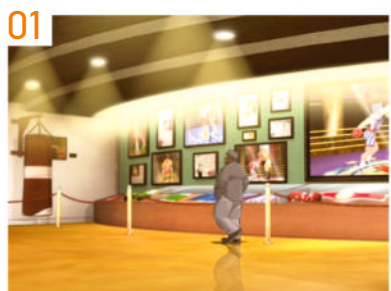
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ENDGAME



PUNCH-OUT!!

» Even a legendary boxer can't stay on top forever. Father Time remains undefeated, and his stamina ensures there's nobody who can hold him off forever. Knowing this, Little Mac makes a vow – he'll keep on fighting until he takes three losses, at which point he'll retire. What happens next? Well dear reader, let's skip to the end and find out...



01 » Visiting Little Mac's museum exhibit shouldn't be this hard for Doc Louis. As a former world champion whose time in the ring has long passed, he's already had the bittersweet experience of hanging up the gloves.



02 » There's no denying reality, though. Despite a heroic effort, a third loss finally brought Little Mac's underdog story to an end. As he wanders, Doc spots something familiar in the corner – his old green bike.



03 » He goes over to the trusty old thing and gives the bell a ring, just for old times' sake. Even if he'd tried to count how much time Mac had spent chasing him on this, he would have lost count by now.



04 » Still, its presence brings him some joy. Doc Louis had a great career of his own, but somehow, Little Mac went from being a scrawny dreamer into a first ballot pick for the hall of fame – and that bike shows Doc he'll always be part of that story. "Good job, kid. Good job," he says to himself.



05 » As he walks away, the camera shows a picture of Doc and Mac training – two great champions at work. Doc hopes that maybe, years from now, a new picture will be hung that shows some young hopeful chasing Mac just like this. But for now, the fighting is finally over for both of them.

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